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2



THEIR
CANOE TRIP.

BY

MARY P. W. SMITH,

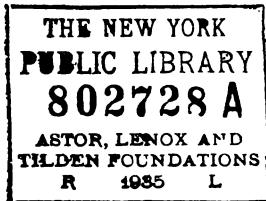
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JOLLY GOOD TIMES, OR CHILD LIFE ON A FARM; JOLLY GOOD TIMES AT
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TO

THE TWO ROXBURY BOYS

UPON WHOSE ACTUAL EXPERIENCES, IN THE SUMMER OF 1875,
THIS STORY IS FOUNDED,

IT IS GRATEFULLY INSCRIBED.

2

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WOR 20JUN'34

*There is in my nature, methinks, a singular
yearning towards all wildness.*

THOREAU:
A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers.

THEIR CANOE TRIP.

CHAPTER I.

THE COUNCIL OF WAR.

“WHAT idea do you suppose Herbert has in his head now?” asked Miss Asenath, as she entered the Osborne library one June morning with the bearing of a person who has a mission laid upon her.

“Dear me! I’m sure I don’t know,” said Mrs. Osborne, her forehead wrinkling in anxious lines that seemed habitual. Her youngest boy, Herbert, was a lively responsibility, whose proper management absorbed much of the energies of his family, more especially of his aunt Asenath.

“What is it now?” asked Marion. “He hasn’t broached any very important new scheme since father refused to let him ship as a common

sailor, after he read Dana's 'Two Years Before the Mast.'

"Well, it is n't quite so bad as that," said Aunt Asenath, loosening her bonnet-strings and fanning herself vigorously, for she had walked rapidly in her excitement; "though it's almost as dangerous, so far as it goes. He wants to go off on a canoeing trip with Gifford King somewhere up in the wilds of Maine, and be gone all summer, camping out and canoeing. Susie Fox told Nellie Mitchell all about it, and Nellie has just told me. I walked up from Winthrop Street with her."

"Then that is what he and Gifford have been brewing," said Marion. "They have had their heads together all the time lately, like two conspirators."

"His father will never consent, I know," said Mrs. Osborne.

"I don't feel so sure of that, mother," said Marion. "Bert has a wonderful faculty of bringing father around to his point of view."

"Oh yes, James will consent. James has an idea that boating, gunning, swimming, skating, all those dangerous sports make a boy

manly," said Aunt Asenath, severely. "For my part, I wonder *any* boys live to grow up, considering all the risks they delight in running."

"Perhaps, Aunt Asenath, there's a divinity that shapes boys' ends, rough-hew them how they will, with a view to the perpetuation of the race," suggested Marion.

"I'm sure Bert needs a special providence to look after him, if any boy ever did," said Aunt Asenath, firmly. "One thing is certain. I shall use all my influence with brother James against this wild scheme."

"Of course you will," Marion thought, but did not say. Nor did she suggest that Aunt Asenath considered herself Bert's special providence, a "humble instrument" to save his life against his own inclinations.

Mrs. Osborne dismissed her anxieties and reassured Miss Asenath, serene in the conviction that Mr. Osborne would make the right decision.

When Herbert came home to Roxbury that afternoon from the Latin School, he found the whole family on the front porch. Mr.

Osborne, whose vocation was law, but whose hobby was gardening, had come home early to engage in a hand-to-hand conflict with the detestable slugs that were devouring his choicest roses, but had been seduced from the path of duty by the too great temptations of the east porch, cool in the shifting shadows of great trees,—trees of his ancestors' planting. Coming from the heated, noisy city, it was not in mortal man to resist enjoying for a little the comforts of his home,—the home he had created and sustained. He had sunk into the big Shaker rocking-chair standing ready for him by his wife's side, and was sipping a glass of iced raspberry shrub which Marion had just brought him. He leaned back, his eyes falling complacently on Marion,—a personification of June, in her white dress,—on the saucy gray squirrels scampering down one tree-trunk and up another, on the flickering light and shadow, on the green-sward, looking, as Herbert noticed, a picture of serenity. Father's moods varied; and when one had a doubtful favor to ask, it was extremely desirable, as Herbert well knew, to "make hay when the sun shone."



"Well, Bert," said Marion, laughing, "'concealment is useless!' Aunt Asenath is close on the scent. Your scheme is out."

"What scheme?"

"The canoe trip to the wilds of Maine, to be sure."

"Thunder!" exclaimed Herbert, throwing down a pile of learned-looking Greek and Latin books on the porch floor and dropping beside them, tipping over Marion's work-basket by the simple process of sitting down in it.

"Dear me, Bert," exclaimed Marion, "I do wish you were n't such a — hurricane!"

"I'll pick everything up," said Herbert, reaching far and near for the rolling spools as he sat, with the proverbial trouble of the "lazy man" who "takes the most pains."

"Why have you been so secret about it, Bert?" asked his father. "You know I detest slyness above everything."

"We wanted to arrange our plans before we said anything about them. I intended to ask you to-night. I don't see how Aunt Asenath got hold of it."

"Nellie Mitchell told her."

"Oho! I see. Gif never can keep anything from Sue Fox, nor she from Nellie Mitchell. That explains."

"Well, let's hear about your plans, Bert," said his father.

"Why, Gif has a canoe up at his uncle's in New Hampshire,—a perfect little beauty, he says. He left her there last summer. We want to take a trip in her in vacation, and bring her home. That's all. The 'wilds of Maine' are all in Nellie Mitchell's imagination."

"Bert, I know I should not sleep a wink while you were gone," said his mother, the anxious wrinkles in full relief. "Canoes are so terribly dangerous!"

"And Bert is so dangerous," said Marion.

"Yes, that is the worst of it," said his father. "You are so careless and thoughtless, Bert, apt to take foolish risks, and run into unnecessary danger. As your mother says, we should suffer great anxiety about you, and not without good reason."

"But I'm going with Gif, father; Gif is steady enough for two."



"True, if you were going, I should prefer Gifford King for your companion to any boy I know. But I doubt Mrs. King's consent; Gifford is her only child, and her idol. And Gifford is too near your own age to have any authority over you. I'm sorry to disappoint you, Bert, but I don't see how I can consent."

Mrs. Osborne looked relieved, while Herbert's face fell.

But here the click of the front gate announced a visitor, and soon from behind the shrubbery appeared Aunt Asenath's tall form striding up the path. Herbert groaned in spirit. "Now for it!" he thought.

Before Aunt Asenath reached the porch there was another click of the gate, and Mrs. King and Gifford came in.

"I foresee a grand council of war," cried Herbert. "Here are all the high contracting powers assembled. Glad to see you, Gif. It's hard work rowing up-stream alone, against the current."

Mrs. King had Gifford's arm as she came up the walk; not that she needed support, but she

loved to lean on this manly son, so much taller than his "little mother," as he called her.

Gifford was tall for his age, and slender, his fair complexion, yellow hair, and blue eyes contrasting as strongly with his friend Herbert's swarthy skin and black eyes dancing with mischief, as did his quiet, persistent temperament with the other's mercurial nature, whimsical vivacity, and overflowing spirits. Herbert was considerably shorter than Gifford, but of a firmer, stouter build, so that in strength they were well matched.

So inseparable were the two, that Marion called them the "pius *Aeneas*" and the "fidus Achates," although, as she said, "frisky" would have been a better descriptive adjective for this particular Achates. What drew together in so strong a friendship boys seemingly so unlike, was a mystery. But under Gifford's quiet demeanor lurked the keenest sense of fun, as Herbert well knew, and the blue eyes could flash as keenly as Herbert's black ones. Gifford's sense of the ludicrous was abundantly ministered to by Herbert's numerous exploits, and he appreciated the warm, loving heart that

went with the thoughtless, often, it seemed, reckless, head of his friend; while Gifford's thorough manliness was like a rock of refuge to Herbert in all his moods and phases.

"I hope, Gifford, you are bringing up reinforcements for our side," said Herbert. "It's going hard with the right; and here comes Aunt Asenath bearing down on us like a man-of-war under full sail, a cannon out of every port-hole, loaded to the muzzle, ready to pour in a broadside that shall blow us all out of the water. Don't deny the soft impeachment, Aunt Senie."

"I certainly shall not," said Aunt Asenath with decision. "I hope, James, you will not think for a moment of consenting to this hare-brained, foolhardy scheme of Bert's. Anything more foolish I never heard of. We all know what canoes are,—tippy, tottly, dangerous things. I never trusted myself in one, and I never will. And you know just how prudent and cautious Herbert is likely to be. If he is n't drowned,—which he is sure to be,—he will contract typhoid fever, or some other fatal disease, in that exposed life. I presume he'll get his feet damp—"

Here both Herbert and Gifford burst into irrepressible laughter.

"You need n't laugh, boys," said Aunt Asenath, solemnly. "It's no laughing matter, especially for you, Herbert. Summer is a sickly season, and you have inherited the Osborne stomach, I'm sorry to say. You would scorn to take proper clothing, and if you had it, you would either lose it or not wear it. You will probably get consumption fixed on you, if you're not carried off by something sudden, like pneumonia or dysentery."

"Cassandra was nowhere compared to you, Aunt Senie," said Herbert, perceiving that both his mother and Mrs. King were deeply impressed by his aunt's mournful presages.

"I know that you, Mrs. King, feel just as I do about it," said Aunt Asenath, turning to that lady.

"I confess I was very much opposed to the plan at first," said Mrs. King; "but Gifford here, as you all know, is too apt to wind his mother around his little finger. So I was almost persuaded when I came over to consult Mr. Osborne about the boys' plans. But I must say



I fear you are right, Miss Osborne. There are so many possibilities of danger in such a trip."

"Oh, I know it," exclaimed Mrs. Osborne, looking almost tearfully at Herbert, as if he were already beginning to fade away. "I really hope, father, you will not give your consent."

"Of course he will not," said Aunt Asenath, briskly. "I am sure, James, you have too much sense to think of countenancing such a scheme even for a moment."

Now, Miss Asenath had a great influence over her brother. She had a rare gift of developing in him all the latent obstinacy of the masculine nature, and, as Herbert said, "Aunt Senie can almost always make father do what she does n't want him to."

So now Mr. Osborne, who in the beginning had been inclined to refuse Herbert's request, began to think of it quite favorably.

"You must consider this, Mrs. King," said he. "The long summer vacation is close at hand, when the boys will have nothing to do for weeks. Will it not in every way be better for them to spend this time in healthy, vigorous,

outdoor sport, in woods and fields, than to be lying about Boston all summer in idleness? Idleness is the mother, and father too, of mischief. Boys must learn sometime, Asenath, to take care of themselves. I can see that such a trip as the boys propose may teach them much worth knowing. It will be a capital thing for them to be thrown on their own resources for a while, and learn to rough it. Nothing like it for making boys manly. The more I think of it, the more I feel inclined to favor the trip," concluded Mr. Osborne, decidedly.

Bert was wild with joy at this unexpected turn in the tide that had set so strongly against him. He slapped Gifford on the knee, with a "Hurrah, old sport! We're going!" and seizing Marion by the waist, waltzed away with her around the wide porch, in spite of her remonstrances that he was ruining her dress.

"I presume Mr. Osborne is right," said his wife, as she leaned over to rescue the pitcher of raspberry shrub from Bert's devastating progress.

"If you really approve, Mr. Osborne," said Mrs. King, "I suppose I must consent, Gifford's heart is so set on this trip."

"Well," said Aunt Asenath gloomily, "remember, whatever happens, that I forewarned you. My skirts are clear. It's Marion's first summer out, and I had planned to take her to the White Mountains and Mt. Desert. But now, there's no telling what is in store for us. It's likely to be a very sad summer for us all!"

"Cheer up, cheer up, Aunt Senie!" cried Herbert, leaning over the back of his aunt's chair, and giving her a resounding kiss. "I'll be tremendously careful. I'll wear my ulster and arctics, if you say so. And I'll bring you home such rare flowers for your herbarium as you never laid eyes on."

"You are good-hearted, Bert, I must confess, in spite of your wild ways," said his aunt, much mollified. "If you *could* get me a specimen of that fern Professor Bracket was describing the other evening, I should be delighted. I think it's found in New Hampshire."

"You shall have it, Aunt Senie, if I perish several times securing it."

"And if you will persist in going," added Aunt Asenath, "I will fit you out with a case of homœopathic remedies to take along, and Dr.

Air's book of symptoms and directions; follow that implicitly, and you will be all right."

"Saved! saved!" cried Herbert, striking a melodramatic attitude, which broke up the council of war in a general laugh.

CHAPTER II.

GETTING UNDER WAY.

NOW began busy times for the King and Osborne families. Herbert kept a diary, and his entry at this time, covering a whole week, was simply this, scrawled in huge letters, covering a page:—

“Trip ! Trip ! Nothing but Trip !!”

A most truthful entry it was.

Fortunately, vacation had now begun, and the boys were thus enabled to give their whole attention to preparations for the trip.

The King and Osborne grounds joined. The boys had made a stile in the division fence. This summer a beaten path was worn in the lawns between the two houses, there were so many points on which Mrs. King and Mrs. Osborne must consult each other, while Gifford and Herbert were constantly being struck with



bright ideas and happy thoughts, requiring immediate consultation on their part. The proposed trip excited the liveliest interest among all the boys' neighbors and relatives, and every one had the most obliging suggestions to make, advice to offer, cautions to give. The vital question was not, as might be supposed, what to take, but rather what *not* to take, at least from the boys' point of view.

Mrs. King and Mrs. Osborne mended and made stanch for the coming conflict certain rejected trousers and heavy jackets which had been laid aside for the worthy poor, but were felt to be just the things for the canoe trip. The boys found Marion fitting out for them a box of needles, thread, buttons, etc.

"What's that for, Marion?" asked Herbert. "Do you expect we're going to put in our spare time doing fancy-work, like two girls?"

"It will be so convenient, Herbert," said his mother, "if a button comes off, or you tear your clothes."

"I generally tie myself up with a piece of string," said Herbert. "But put them in; I dare say Gif, here, can sew."

"Put in plenty of darning-needles then," said Gifford, "if I'm to do the sewing. I never use anything smaller."

Aunt Asenath brought over, with the case of homœopathic remedies and the book of medical advice, a huge roll of flannel pieces, a box of prepared mustard plasters, a large bottle of arnica, much court-plaster, and various other articles she said they were sure to need. The boys did not hurt her feelings by rejecting these well-meant attentions, but foresaw that they should soon lose or forget this portion of their luggage.

Mrs. Osborne and Mrs. King who were allopathic, said nothing to Aunt Aseñath, but quietly prepared bottles of rhubarb, Jamaica ginger, camphor, cholera medicine, vaseline, glycerine, etc., which they resolved should go, whatever else was omitted.

"If we get hard up, Bert," said Gifford, when he saw this array of bottles, all carefully tied and labelled, "we can start a drug-store somewhere up in New Hampshire. We shall certainly have a full outfit. By the way, did you get that rope?"



"I've bought two capital ones, strong enough to anchor a steamship. What do you call your canoe, Gif? I never heard her name."

"The 'Black-eyed Susan,'" replied Gifford, looking Herbert straight in the eye, with a laugh-if-you-dare expression.

"Oho! Aha! I see," cried Herbert. "I must say, Gif, for a plain, steady, matter-of-fact appearing fellow on the surface, you have rather a deepish vein of romance in you. You're an out-and-out 'still gazelle.'"

"My dear boy, you may possibly have heard that homely but truthful old adage,—'The pot can't call the kettle black.' In view of your state of mind about Bessie Temple, I don't see how you can say much."

"Oh, Bessie Temple! Of course," said Herbert. "That's all right. But I don't pretend not to care, and you do. That's the difference."

"To change the subject," said Gifford, "what do you think of this?" And with some triumph he produced from its brown paper wrapping a dark-lantern.

"The very thing!" cried Herbert, delighted with the air of adventure and mystery this at

once threw over the trip. "I've laid in a hatchet, a lot of tacks and shingle-nails and matches, and a box of wooden toothpicks."

"Good!"

"But what do you suppose is Aunt Asenath's latest idea? She insists we shall take our winter flannels and ulsters! She had lots to say about the changeableness of the New Hampshire climate, cold nights, northeast rain-storms, and I don't know what not, till my mother and yours decided that it would n't do any hurt for us to take them, even if we did n't use them."

"They forget," said Gifford, "that one small canoe cannot possibly hold all the contents of two large houses."

"I know it," said Herbert. "I wonder Aunt Asenath doesn't insist on our taking a base-burner and an ice-chest, to be ready for all the emergencies she foresees! But never mind, she's awfully good, after all; she's given me five dollars to help get our outfit."

"That certainly covers a deal of good advice," said Gifford, laughing.

The question of provisioning the "Black-eyed Susan" for the voyage was the most agitating of

all, and brought out all the counsellors in full force.

"Mother," remonstrated Herbert, "you must remember you are not provisioning the 'king's navee.' This is only two boys and a canoe."

"Two boys can manage to dispose of considerable food, I've noticed," said Mrs. Osborne, "and canoeing will make you very hungry. If you only would consent to taking a frying-pan and a coffee-pot, as Aunt Asenath suggests, and a ham, and a piece of dried beef, and bacon, and some cans of fruit and pickles, you would find they would not come amiss."

"Well, we've compromised. We are going to take the coffee-pot and some coffee and sugar."

"I don't see where you will get cream," said Aunt Asenath.

"Oh, I know how to milk," said Gifford.

"There'll be plenty of cows all along the river-banks," said Herbert. "We intend to go in light marching order, and live off the enemy's country."

In addition to coffee and sugar, the boys were only willing to take some devilled ham, bags of crackers and cookies, salt, and raisins.

"I know," said Herbert, "that this is a vastly more important expedition than Stanley's across the Dark Continent. But, with all deference to Aunt Asenath, it is *not* quite as dangerous, nor shall we be as many miles from a lemon, and the other comforts of civilization, as was our fellow-explorer. Besides, Gif is going to take his rifle, and I my fish-pole, and it will go hard if we don't strike some game."

"I think the boys are right," said Mr. Osborne. "They can always buy what they need, and it is not best to overload them. In these days of telegraphs and railroads they are not likely to suffer, in any contingency."

The boys were each to take a woollen blanket, and Herbert had a rubber blanket, a relic of his older brother's war experiences, which the boys felt would prove useful. Their boating-rig was dark-blue flannel shirts and knickerbockers, heavy jackets and the old trousers aforesaid being taken for emergencies.

Although to the boys' impatience the days seemed to crawl along at an aggravatingly slow pace, and to delight in crawling, at last everything was ready, and the date of starting was

"I agree with you. I think we'd best get off by five o'clock. It will give us all the more time to make our connections."

"Agreed," said Herbert.

So, in the stillness of the early morning, when every bird in Roxbury was singing rapturously, as if it knew all about the canoe trip and sympathized with the boys' feelings, when the tree-shadows stretched long and cool from the eastward across the dewy lawns, when no one was stirring save an occasional ice-man or milkman, the "two great explorers, the second Kane and Livingstone," as Herbert was fond of calling his friend and himself, said farewell to their foreboding families, received their last warnings and cautions, and turned their backs as joyfully on their luxurious homes as if escaping from prison, hieing to Boston to take the train for New Hampshire, where the "Black-eyed Susan" was supposed to be literally leaping out of the water in impatience for their arrival.

Great was the stillness, the sense of emptiness and desolation, that settled down over their respective households after their depart-



ure, even though every one did draw a long breath, and experience a certain sense of relief.

Mrs. King felt that it was almost more than she could bear.

"I've half a mind to go up in New Hampshire and board, in order to be close at hand if anything happens," she said.

"Oh, nothing is going to happen," said Mr. Osborne, cheerfully. "Boys must go into the water if they are to learn how to swim. Leave them to themselves, and let them learn to fight life's battle on their own account."

CHAPTER III.

OFF AT LAST.

ARRIVED at the home of Gifford's uncle, in
Francestown, New Hampshire, after some
decent inquiries for the welfare of his relatives,
Gifford's first question was to ask the state of
the "Black-eyed Susan."

"Oh, she's all right; taut as—as a drum,"
said Uncle Nathan, heartily. "I've got her
out of winter-quarters, on the lake, all ready
for you. I knew the grass wouldn't have
much time to grow under your feet after you
got here, before you boys would have to in-
spect that canoe."

"We'll go right down to the lake now,
before tea, if Aunt Eliza don't mind," said
Gifford.

There, on the clear water, sat the trim and
jaunty "Black-eyed Susan," as much a thing

of beauty as the pretty girl whose name she was honored by bearing. She was a light canvas canoe, about fourteen feet long, and two and three-quarters feet wide across the centre; was painted a light green, with a small white star on the starboard bow, "for luck," Gifford said. When loaded, she drew about two inches of water.

Her beautiful curves, the airy grace of her outlines, the ease with which she sat the water, filled Gifford's heart with pride, while Herbert, who had never seen her before, embraced Gifford in a wild burst of rapture.

"Oh, Gif," he cried, "she is beautiful! She is immense! A swan is awkward compared to her!"

"Yes, she is a pretty thing," admitted Gifford, a quiet satisfaction at Herbert's admiration shining in his eyes.

Canoe and paddles, as Uncle Nathan had said, were all found sound and in good shape for the strain of the coming trip.

The outlet of this lake where the canoe lay was the Piscataquog River. Down this stream the boys proposed paddling into the Merrimac,

and thence home to Boston by the network of little inland rivers in Massachusetts.

It took a few days at Francestown to complete all arrangements for the final start, so that it was late in July ere Herbert was able to enter in his journal : —

“Weather fine! My hopes are at last realized! We are started!”

There is a fine dash and go about this passage, which suggests the voyagers leaping aboard, seizing their paddles, pushing off and away, the “Black-eyed Susan” bounding down the swift current, impelled by two pairs of strong young arms, at lightning speed.

Unfortunately the actual facts did not realize this pleasing picture, but were much more prosaic, as facts are wont to be. The boys found, on examination, that the river was not practicable for a canoe until it reached Willow Bridge, some way below Francestown; so they were forced to engage Mr. Hull, a friendly farmer, and an old acquaintance of Gifford in former summers, to convey canoe, canoeists, and luggage to this point.

The boys tenderly supported the “Black-eyed

Susan " upon each side as they jogged along the stony road, lest some rude jolt should bruise her tender sides,—

" Fashioned so slenderly,
Young, and so fair,"

as Herbert said.

Their departure from Francestown, though not romantic, was not unattended with *éclat*, all the small boys of the surrounding country, attracted by the novel sight, and the fame of the canoeists' coming exploits, gathering in force, and escorting the wagon on its way with appropriate demonstrations, and such wild hootings as brought every man, woman, and child along the route to door or window, to watch the wagon till out of sight.

At last the canoe was safely launched on the waters of the Piscataquog.

" Here we go ! " said Gifford, smiling at Herbert, as he picked up his paddle.

" Yes, we're off at last," said Herbert, excitedly. " Good-by, Mr. Hull, good-by ! " waving his hat to that gentleman, sitting in his wagon, watching the boys off with a sympa-

thetic grin, while his old horse turned her head too, and regarded her late load solemnly, as if glad to see the last of them.

"Good-by, boys! Luck go with you!" shouted Mr. Hull, waving his hat in return, as the boys glided off.

"Hi yi! Whoop! Hooray!" yelled the small boys, turning a few extra somersets to celebrate the occasion, and hastening to throw stones after our heroes, in a well-meant effort to "give 'em a good splashing," then dropping all, and scudding off to hang on behind Mr. Hull's wagon.

There is nothing like realizing a long-deferred expectation. The boys were perfectly happy as they sped swiftly down the clear, bright stream. At last they were really off on the long-talked-of, dreamed-of, hoped-for trip, free to do as they pleased, their own masters, an unknown world before them to be conquered, and all sorts of adventures awaiting them, in imagination.

"This is something like it, Gif!" said Bert.

"Yes; she slips along beautifully, does n't she?"



"Light as a feather. I'd no idea canoeing would be so easy. We paddle together capitally, too."

"Hallo, what's this!" suddenly exclaimed Gifford, as they rounded a projecting point of rocks. "Hold on, Bert! Snags ahead!"

Herbert "held on" just in time to prevent the "Susan" crashing into a huge rock projecting from mid-current. For some distance ahead the bed of the stream was full of great rocks, among and around which the water rushed in tortuous channels that seemed impassable for the canoe.

"This is a pretty how d' ye do!" said Herbert, disgusted at this unexpected conduct on the part of the Piscataquog. "What are we going to do now?"

"There's nothing for it but to strip, and pull some of these rocks out of the way, so we can get the 'Susan' through," said Gifford, taking off his shoes and stockings.

Herbert followed suit, and the boys were soon in the water to their waists, pulling and heaving rocks about like two young Titans. It was now the middle of the day, and the

summer sun beat hotly down on their bent and weary backs.

"Fun, isn't it?" said Herbert grimly, after they had toiled vigorously for some time, without making progress at all proportioned to their exertions.

"Oh, this is n't going to last much longer," said Gifford. "We'll soon get out of this, and then we'll be all right."

But when, after an hour's steady work, they had only succeeded in getting the "Susan" a few rods farther down-stream, even Gifford's persistence began to fail.

"Well, this is slow work," he said, standing up in the water, the perspiration rolling down his glowing red face. "See here, Bert; I believe I'll go up to that house over there and borrow a wheelbarrow to take the canoe around this place. You be unloading her while I'm gone."

"All right!" said Herbert. "I should think it was about time for you to give in, if you don't wish soon to have to

'think of one who in his youthful beauty died,
The fair meek blossom that toiled on and faded by your
side.'



I knew it was useless to stand out. If you had made up your mind to pull the White Mountains down, and throw them into the sea, you would die doing it, before you would give up. This water is awfully cold. Between roasting above, and freezing below, and a general vacancy within, I think I begin to feel several of Aunt Senie's diseases coming on. Where's that cheerful book of deadly symptoms she gave us?"

Undisturbed by his friend's sarcasm, to which indeed long use had hardened him, Gifford struck off across lots for the wheelbarrow; while Herbert, after unloading the canoe, sat on the bank in the shade, munching crackers, until his friend's return with the wheelbarrow, upon which they fastened the canoe and paddles, Gifford going ahead with them, while Herbert followed, laden with the carpet-bag, valise, roll of blankets, and the other impedimenta.

Presently Gifford found himself alone, Herbert having fallen far in the rear.

"What's the matter?" shouted Gifford.

"Nothing. This coffee-pot is too numerous, that's all, and I'm strapping it on my back to

get it out of the way. Go ahead. I 'll soon overtake you. This load 's nothing, to a second Hercules like me."

After a while, finding that Herbert was still far behind, Gifford sat down to rest and wait for him. Presently Herbert came puffing along, stumbling over stones and tree-roots.

"This is real romantic, is n't it, Gif ?" he exclaimed, with an air of profound disgust, throwing himself and his burdens on the ground, to the imminent danger of the coffee-pot. "There 's nothing like canoeing, for out-and-out fun : —

‘ A life on the ocean wave,
And a home on the rolling deep,
Where the scattered waters rave,
And the winds their revels keep, —
The wi-i-inds, the wi-i-inds, the wi-inds
their rev-els keep! ’ ”

This last jerked out in a prolonged roar that woke all the sleeping echoes in the hills about, and caused Gifford to protest.

"Don 't roar in that unearthly way, Bert ! The natives will hear your howling, get out their shot-guns, and hunt us down for river pirates ! "

"You evidently have no ear for music, Gif. I always mistrusted it; now I know it. An appreciative person would have been touched, moved to tears, I may say, at hearing a suffering soul pour forth its agony in song. Didn't you notice that my voice was tremulous with real feeling? I wish the winds would keep their revels about me just now. There is n't a breath of air stirring, and I'm so hot that the grass is scorched this minute, I presume, under my parched form."

"I can't say I'm what you would call cool, myself," said Gifford, fanning himself with his hat, and contemplating some blisters forming on the inside of his hands. "This canoe is no feather, let me tell you, nor was this track laid out for a race-course. But if we're going to put this trip through and make a success of it, we can't afford to mind trifles. A few hardships don't count, for explorers, you know. You mustn't be so easily disgusted. This is n't going to last forever. I think I see indications of clear, deep water ahead, even now."

Gifford was right. The rocks soon disappeared from the channel, and an inviting stretch

of clear, smooth water appeared ahead. Gifford returned the wheelbarrow, while Bert reloaded the canoe. Again they were afloat, the ease and swiftness of the canoe's motion a delightful rest, fully recompensing them for all their labors. But this was too good to last. As they were paddling silently along, even Herbert too tired to talk for once in his life, a suspicious roaring greeted their ears above the murmur of the rippling stream and the plashing of the paddles.

"It's a mill-dam!" exclaimed Gifford. "That explains this deep, smooth water. Well, there's no help for it. We'll have to carry her around."

"Yours to command, captain!" cried Bert, leaping out into the water and manfully seizing his end of the "Black-eyed Susan," helping lug and tug her through bush and brake and brier, and over stones and rocks, around the dam. The luggage was brought around, and once more they pushed hopefully on.

But soon they came to an absolutely impassable place. The Piscataquog, in fact, was true to itself as a genuine New England river, picturesque as any artist could wish, but ill adapted

for canoeing. On ahead of them the boys saw its bright waters roaring and boiling down a narrow channel full of great bowlders that fretted the swift brown current into creamy foam as it dashed madly against them in its downhill course. Even Gifford's courage faltered before the size of these bowlders.

"Hum!" said Gifford, staring blankly at the immovable bowlders. "What's to be done now, I wonder?"

"Perhaps we can get help at that shanty over in the edge of those woods," suggested Herbert.

The shanty, however, proved to be deserted and empty. But far off in the fields they saw some men haying. These men were at once interested in the boys' troubles. In the quiet, uneventful life they lived, remote from the great world, the unexpected advent of our two canoeists was quite a startling episode. Indeed, they figured long afterward in the simple annals of the country-side as "them two boys from Boston that tried to row down the Piscataquog; seemed to be likely kind o' boys, too."

These men good-naturedly took hold and

carried the canoe around the rocky passage into the smooth water below, refusing all pay for their services, and standing on the bank and watching the graceful "Black-eyed Susan" until she glided out of sight.

Hardly had the boys drawn a long breath and congratulated themselves on the ease with which they had surmounted this difficulty, when the deepening water and a low roar announced another dam.

"I say, Gif," said Herbert, "I could make some awfully profane remarks about the Piscataquog, if I let myself out."

"You'd best not," said Gifford, laughing. "But it is decidedly tough, I'm free to admit. Just put me ashore, and I'll run down and see what this dam is like."

He soon returned, reporting: "It's rather a low dam, with a considerable slant, and a good flow of water over it. I think we can let her slide down this time, and save the portage."

First unloading the canoe, they fastened one of Herbert's ropes to each end. Then Herbert stood in the water to the middle, holding one rope, while Gifford ran along the bank with the

other; and thus they managed to half pull, half guide the canoe safely over the dam. She shipped considerable water, so it was necessary to tip that out before they could reload and push on.

The sun, which sets early among the mountains, was now just disappearing behind the range of hills that rose boldly up against the western sky. Cool shadows fell across the river, a dewy freshness replaced the torrid heat of the day, and a delicious evening breeze, breathing subtle wild fragrance of pine woods, of brake and fern and new-mown hay, blew over the boys' bare heads and revived their drooping spirits.

"Let's paddle at night after this, Gif," suggested Herbert, "and lie off in the daytime."

"I feel ready to lie off now," said Gifford, "the moment we come to any sort of a stopping-place for the night. You're not hungry, Bert, I know."

"Hungry! Oh, no. I passed that some hours ago. I'm in the last stages of starvation. It's a pity we did n't think to bring along some condensed beef-tea, so we could have taken a

teaspoonful or so at a time, till we were sufficiently revived to be able to bear solid food. I second the motion to tie up for the night as soon as you please."

The twilight deepened, and still the boys paddled on, coming to no house in the solitary region through which they were voyaging. Straining their eyes through the gathering gloom, they scanned either shore anxiously. At length they dimly descried the outline of a building of some sort on the left shore, though no lights gleamed from it. Landing and reconnoitring, they found it to be a deserted, half-ruined mill.

"We may as well stop here for the night," said Gifford. "We might go farther and fare worse. At least, we shall have a roof over our heads."

Herbert was too glad to stop anywhere, on any excuse, to be fastidious about his accommodations. Tying the canoe to a white birch sapling which leaned out over the river, its roots securely anchored in the rocks among which they had crowded out a foothold, the boys unloaded their luggage and entered the mill.

They found its lower story floorless, and open to wind and weather on all sides. Lighting the dark-lantern, and feeling uncommonly like heroes of romance pursuing some wild adventure, they cautiously ascended the rickety staircase, and explored the upper story. This proved to be more promising, though its windows were entirely gone, and the plastering, once on the walls, now strewed the floor in chunks and heaps. They brought all their luggage up here, for greater safety.

"Shall I let the portcullis fall?" asked Herbert. "In other words, shall I kick the staircase away? We can easily drop down in the morning."

"No," said Gifford, "I don't believe it is necessary. I hardly think we shall be molested in this lonely region. We seem to be the only human beings about. What do you say about cooking something for supper?"

Herbert could only dimly see Gifford, as the dark-lantern's one ray shone straight out the sashless window, against a pine-covered hillside, where no doubt its unnatural radiance disturbed the slumbers of the birds, but it only slightly

illuminated the surrounding gloom. Though Herbert could not see Gifford's face, he noticed that his voice sounded hollow.

"No, sir!" said Herbert. "A cold bite's good enough for me to-night, especially if I'm expected to do the cooking. Have a cracker, Gif? 'There's nothing like eating hay when you're faint,' as the White King told Alice in '*The Looking-Glass*.'"

Having stifled their hunger as best they might with crackers and cookies, they prepared to camp for the night. Gifford kicked the plaster out of one corner as well as he could in the semi-darkness, threw down the rubber blanket, to, as he said, "mitigate the asperities" of the plaster chunks that might still remain, and, rolling up in his woollen blanket, called out to Herbert, who was fumbling about among the luggage to make sure that his fishing-rod had not been lost, —

"Come, Bert, let up, and settle down. Come along to the

‘bower I have shaded for you;
Your bed shall be roses besprinkled with dew,’ —
besprinkled with plaster, any way.”

Bert did not come at once. Finally, satisfied that the fishing-rod was there all right, he said:

“Down upon my pillow soft,
I do lay my little head,”

and tumbling head-first in the darkness, fell with all his weight on Gifford.

“This may be fun for you, Bert, but it’s death to me,” groaned Gifford, giving Herbert so determined a push that he rolled off the blanket into a pile of plaster. “I was almost asleep, and I thought the old mill had fallen down, and that I was buried in the ruins.”

“Ugh!” groaned Bert in reply, as he rolled back on the blanket. “It was ruins, sure enough, so far as I am concerned. Don’t kick, Gif, and I’ll promise to lie as still as the dead man I am.”

Soon, in spite of some thoughts of the far-away homes, some private wonder as to how their mothers would feel if they knew where their boys were that night, they were sound asleep, in the deep, sweet repose that follows bodily fatigue in the open air. All was still, save the rushing sound of the Piscataquog, the lonely peeping of frogs. When the moon rose,

and shone in at the open windows of the deserted mill, her light fell on the two boys sleeping as peacefully as the Babes in the Wood.

Herbert, who intended to keep a regular log of this remarkable voyage, entered in his journal the next morning,—

“First day out. Francestown to old mill, three miles.”

It should be said that Herbert's distances were only approximate, he having no means of being perfectly accurate.

CHAPTER IV.

DOWN THE PISCATAQUOG.

THE sun had to climb high up the eastern sky before it could peep over the mountains down into the valley where stood the old mill. It was shining brightly in the boys' faces when they awoke from their heavy slumbers.

Gifford groaned, yawned, stretched, and finally pulled himself slowly up, in sections, as it were. Herbert lay laughing at him as he limped feebly about.

"You need n't laugh," said Gifford. "Try it yourself. I advise you to come to by degrees. I have twice the number of bones I had in my body yesterday, and I'm vividly conscious of every one of them."

"I should say so," said Herbert, as he too crawled up and out. "If anything happens to me, old boy, my remains can be identified by

the print, on my right side, of a large triangular lump of plaster. I'm marked for life, I know."

It was a lovely summer morning, as bright and beautiful as could be imagined, although the promise was for a very hot day, later. But now all was dewy freshness, and bird-songs, and long, cool shadows. The boys plunged into the Piscataquog's clear waters, and enjoyed a delightful swim, which refreshed and revived them wonderfully. As they moved about, their lameness wore off, and their spirits soon rose to the habitual high-water mark.

"The first thing," said Gifford, "is to breakfast; and then we must be off. Can you make coffee, Bert?"

"Of course I can. There's nothing to be done but put the coffee in and let it boil. Any one can do that. I'll build a fire and get breakfast, while you explore around for a cow, and load the luggage aboard."

Bert soon gathered dry sticks enough to make a blazing fire, upon which he put the coffee-pot, and then spread the devilled ham, crackers, etc., out on a convenient flat rock.

When Gifford returned from a vain hunt for a cow, Herbert asked,—

“ You don’t happen to have a hen’s egg in your pocket, do you? ”

“ No ; what for? ”

“ To settle the coffee. You know they generally put something in to settle it. I ’ll drop in a handful of salt. I guess that will answer just as well. Explorers mustn’t be too fastidious. The coffee smells first-rate, and I guess it ’s good. It ’s been boiling like everything — Hallo, here ’s a go! ”

“ What is the matter now? ” asked Gifford.

“ The nose is melted off the coffee-pot, and it ’s sprung a leak besides. Here, give us your cup, quick, before it all leaks away! ”

The boys sat on a mossy old log, making the best of their poor breakfast, as convivial as two genial pirates. Herbert kept pressing tenderloin steak and broiled chops on Gifford, and begging him to take another hot roll or to try the omelet, all of which lent an imaginary flavor to dry crackers and devilled ham.

“ We may as well leave the coffee-pot behind.

It's no good now, and I don't care very much for coffee, any way," said Gifford.

"Nor I," said Herbert, "especially when I cook it myself. Every cloud has its silver lining, however. There will be one less thing to carry. It will be an interesting relic for future explorers to discover here."

"It will be strange if we don't strike some farm-house to-day, where we can get a good dinner," said Gifford.

"Hope on, hope ever," said Herbert. "Crackers will sustain life, any way."

In short, the boys started off in cheerful spirits, disposed to make the best of everything. The dam below the old mill they — as Herbert entered in his journal — "got over somehow," and then they paddled hopefully off down-stream.

"It's sure to be easier to-day," said Gifford, "because the farther we go down-stream, the nearer the Merrimac we are, and the deeper the Piscataquog will naturally grow."

"Of course. Truisms, mere truisms, old boy," assented Herbert cheerfully.

For a while these hopeful predictions were

realized. The water was smooth and clear, deep enough to permit the "Black-eyed Susan" to glide swiftly on. Now and then, as they invaded the solitary "haunts of coot and hern," up from reedy covert flew wild ducks and herons, screaming shrill notes of alarm at this unusual disturbance of their lonely nesting-places.

"If I only had my rifle!" exclaimed Gifford, all the hunter instinct aroused in his breast by these tantalizing glimpses of game.

But the rifle had been reluctantly left behind, out of deference to the fears of his mother, who felt that two boys, a canoe, and a rifle formed a dangerous combination. Subsequent events of the trip satisfied Gifford that it was well the rifle had been left at home.

Just as the boys were venturing thoroughly to enjoy themselves, they came to another dam.

"There certainly are some advantages in barbarism," exclaimed Gifford. "Stanley, in the heart of Africa, whatever his sufferings, at least did not have to struggle with a series of mill-dams. We shall have to strip for this one, Bert."

"Enough said," responded Bert, cheerfully.

They undressed, — a simple process, — and succeeded in getting the boat over, enjoying a fine shower-bath under the dam. And now such a hard road to travel as lay before these long-suffering, much-enduring canoeists! They had demonstrated to their own entire satisfaction that the Piscataquog ought to be smoother and deeper to-day. It ought, perhaps; but it certainly was not. On the contrary, this wayward river seemed resolved to-day to show its worst possibilities. The bed of the stream was full of bowlders, tumbled in promiscuously and lavishly, while the shallow water wound crookedly and meagrely through the labyrinth of rocks and stones.

With bare feet and legs the boys waded slowly along, one at each end of the canoe, often stopping to pull rocks out of the way, dragging the canoe along, zigzagging it across the stream, wherever the bowlders afforded a passage, making but slow and painful progress. The mid-day sun beat down fiercely on their aching backs, and their bare feet slipped on the rocky bottom, getting many a hard knock

and scratch. Sometimes they tumbled over a rock; sometimes, for variety, a rock rolled, and tumbled over on their feet.

"If we should happen to stave in the canoe on one of these rocks, we should be in trouble," said Gifford.

"Happy thought!" said Herbert. "Let's do it! I tell you what, Gif, I begin to sympathize with that man who, when ridden out of town by his appreciative neighbors, remarked: 'Boys, if it were n't for the name of the thing, I'd almost as soon walk!' Canoeing sounds well, to talk about, but I must say I think we're a good deal like that other man who made a journey by canal-boat, working his passage by driving the horses."

After toiling awhile longer, Herbert said: "I've an idea! I put a pair of old slippers in my valise, thinking they might come handy. We can use those to protect our feet."

It now became necessary to unload the canoe. Gifford then walked along the bank, carrying the luggage; while Herbert, in the slippers, which, as he said, "were a sort of salvation" to him, waded down the stream, dragging the

canoe along her intricate course with desperate energy.

After a while they changed places. But Herbert soon found that, on the whole, it was easier and pleasanter dragging the canoe in the water with the slippers on, than plodding along without them through bush and briars and stones, in the broiling sun, with the weary load of baggage.

“Like an eagle caged I pine
On the dull, unchanging shore ;
Give me the flashing brine,
The spray, and the tempest’s roar !”

he sang, as sonorously as if he had been old Father Neptune himself.

“ If that means you want to change places again, I’m willing,” said Gifford. “ In fact, I’ll do almost anything if you will only *not* howl. I suppose you call it singing.”

Ominous clouds were now rolling darkly up the sky, and distant mutterings all around the horizon preluded a coming shower. The clouds shut out the sun’s remorseless glare; but the air was so sultry and breathless, that the heat seemed more oppressive than before.



And still the rocks held out. It seemed as if they never would reach smooth water. No place or time had offered for that good dinner to which the boys had looked forward so hopefully in the morning, and of which they painfully felt the need. It was now three o'clock. Herbert, whose courage had held out much better than Gifford had expected, now gave out. Sitting down on a rock in the water, the dirt on his face beautifully variegated by the tricklings of perspiration, his hat shoved desperately back on his close-cropped head, his expression glum and gloomy in the extreme, he flatly refused to go farther without his dinner.

Gifford, who looked and felt, to tell the truth, much like Herbert, but who was impatient at the way they had dragged their slow length along all day, and who also had the more persistent nature, remonstrated with him in vain.

"No, sir!" said Herbert.

"' This rock shall fly
From its firm base as soon as I,'

unless you consent, here and now, to abandon the 'Black-eyed Susan' to her fate, and strike

off across lots somewhere for dinner. ‘I can no farther go’ till after grub!’

“Nonsense!” exclaimed Gifford. “When we’ve made so little distance to-day, anyway, to waste time scouring the country around for dinner! We ought to be pushing ahead. We have n’t even made New Boston yet.”

So the argument waged back and forth, finally subsiding into a sullen silence. Suddenly Gifford broke it by bursting into a hearty laugh.

“What in the world are you laughing at?” growled Herbert.

“You. It occurred to me, what if Bessie Temple could see you now! She would hardly recognize the elegant Herbert Osborne, ‘the glass of fashion and the mould of form,’ in the melancholy wreck I see before me, stranded in the bed of the Piscataquog!”

Herbert laughed,—he could not help it; and when once you’ve laughed, the backbone of despair is broken.

“Here, old boy, you say you’re hungry; have a doughnut,” said Gifford, extending the bag of these luxuries, its contents rather damp from the misadventures of the day.

"This reminds me," said Herbert, as he ate a soggy doughnut, "of the White Queen's saying to Alice, 'You are thirsty — have a biscuit.'"

Herbert being sufficiently revived by this delightful refreshment to struggle on, the boys resumed their warfare with the Piscataquog, and toiled on, to have, at last, the rocks disappear, but only because they were concealed by the deep water set back above another dam. Yes, they had worked so hard, only to come to another dam.

Just as they made this unwelcome discovery, the dark clouds broke in a deluge of rain. Hastily throwing the rubber blanket over their luggage, to save it, if possible, from the thorough drenching they themselves were getting, they secured the "Susan," and looked about for shelter.

At the dam was a grist-mill, where the boys thought they might lodge. Some distance below the mill stood a house, where they resolved to reconnoitre, and see what could be done for meals. In response to their knock, a young woman opened the door, two small

children clinging to her skirts, peering timidly around at the strangers.

The boys had agreed on this formula to be used on such occasions: —

“ We are canoeists. We are paddling down the river, stopping at farm-houses. We can pay our way.” This Gifford repeated in his most polished society manner, adding, “ We called to ask if we could sleep in the mill overnight. I presume it belongs to your husband.”

“ Ye-es,” replied the woman, looking with evident distrust on these rather rough-looking young fellows standing before her, dripping in the rain. “ But he’s away. I expect him home though, every minute,” she added hastily.

“ How far is it to New Boston?” asked Gifford, seeing that no hospitable welcome awaited them here.

“ Oh, it’s only a little way down the river!”

Finding themselves so near New Boston, the boys decided to walk down to the village and write home, they having promised to let their anxious friends hear from them at every opportunity. As they walked on, they found themselves in a most picturesque region. Great

hills rose grandly on every side, up whose green sides the mist was now rolling. The black clouds had passed over, and lay darkly along the eastern horizon. As they entered the little village, the setting sun gleamed out, flooding the whole dripping earth with a golden radiance that converted each hanging raindrop, on bush and bough, into a flashing prism.

The pretty village, with its white church, its neat houses peeping out from green foliage, nestled in the lovely valley, through which ran the Piscataquog, a beautiful stream, as even the boys were forced to admit.

"I can almost forgive the Piscataquog everything," said Herbert, "it is such a pretty stream, here, any way."

"I never saw a lovelier spot than this," said Gifford, with unwonted enthusiasm.

Perhaps, unconsciously to the boys, part of New Boston's charm for them lay in its name, reminding them, as it did, of home, and of that city dear to all true Bostonians. Having written and mailed their postal cards, they procured a modest supper, and then set out on their return to the mill, where they had left the "Susan."

Although the boys had been in the village only an hour, every one knew all about them, who they were, where from, where going,—the whole story, in short; and they found themselves quite heroes. A man, with whom they had talked some at the Post-Office, overtook them as they were starting out on their muddy walk.

"If you're going my way, hop in, and I'll give you a lift," he said heartily.

The tired boys accepted this offer gladly. Further talk developed the welcome fact that this was the miller, and he not only cheerfully consented to let them sleep in the mill that night, but even brought them out some old comfortables from the house, which were the more acceptable, as the boys found that their blankets were very damp.

"So endeth the second lesson," said Herbert, as they turned wearily in on the mill floor.

"Who would imagine," said Gifford, "that it is only two days since we started? It seems like a month."

The boys soon fell sound asleep, to the lullaby

of the Piscataquog's rumble and tumble over the dam, — a sound that often, mingling with their dreams, made them repeat in sleep the toils and misadventures of the day. Herbert's entry in his journal, made by the uncertain light of the dark-lantern, was, —

“ Second day. Old mill to grist-mill, three miles. Six miles from starting-point.”

CHAPTER V.

AN ADVENTURE.

THE next morning was a lovely one after the shower, which had purified and freshened the air, washed and brightened the whole landscape. Although the boys rose feeling rather lame and old from their unaccustomed toil, it was not in human nature, especially young human nature, to resist what Emerson calls "the fine influences of the morning," of such a morning as this, above all. Some generous cups of coffee brought out by their host the miller added to their good cheer. They had discovered, too, that there was a delightful, an unexpected canal which would take them easily around the dam.

The miller's small children, who had been won from coyness to firm friendship by the boys' good-comradeship and fun, to say nothing

of a few pennies, stood on the bank watching them paddle off with quite as genuine awe and admiration as if they had been the real Kane and Livingstone, or even Christopher Columbus himself. They stood watching the canoe glide rapidly down-stream in the morning sunlight, cutting the bright water swiftly, the paddles wielded by the strong arms of the young canoeists rising and falling in a silent rhythm, the whole to the children a poem, a vision of romance.

As the "Black-eyed Susan" disappeared behind the pines and white birches overhanging the great projecting rock at the bend of the river below, and vanished forever from the children's gaze, the little boy heaved a deep sigh.

"When I am a man, Polly," he said, "I shall have a boat just like that, and I will take you in it, and we will go way, way off, all over the world, — I don't know where."

And little Polly clapped her hands and jumped up and down for glee at the mere thought of such happiness.

Pleasantly as the day began, its experiences were destined to be chiefly a monotonous repe-

tition of the toils and sufferings already undergone. Soon after leaving the grist-mill they came to another dam. It looked decidedly discouraging, being very high, with no water flowing over. By the aid of their ropes, with a great effort of mechanical skill, they succeeded in lifting the canoe over and dropping her into the pool below, not, however, without tipping out most of their goods and chattels into the water.

There was hardly any water below the dam, so much had been held back above, and they were forced to await its slow rising and pouring over. Then the water rose in the river, and the boys' spirits with it. They sped on in fine style for a while, making a grand spurt under New Boston bridge, upon which they found a crowd of spectators standing, watching to see them come down the river and go under,—a crowd including not only all the small boys of the village, but many of the big ones as well.

"Ahem! the proudest moment of my life!" said Gifford in a stage whisper, as they sped under the bridge amid the comments of the on-lookers.

"Yes," said Herbert. "We are almost equal to Barnum's Circus, as a Moral Show of Unparalleled Colossal Grandeur. We ought to get out posters, and placard the towns in advance downstream, to let them know we are coming."

The forenoon wore rapidly away in the efforts and delays caused by the innumerable dams that diversified the amiable Piscataquog. At noon, they made a meagre luncheon from their much-diminished and damp store of provisions. The afternoon brought another long, dreary stretch of rocks and shallows. The old slippers were worn out. It would not do to ruin their only pairs of shoes; yet some protection for their bare feet from the sharp rocks was absolutely necessary. What was to be done?

Some little distance inland, Gifford saw a farm-house.

"Perhaps, Bert," he suggested, looking doubtfully at his friend, "you might beg a pair of old boots or shoes over at that farm-house."

"Come, now, I like that!" said Herbert. "So I am the victim selected for sacrifice, am I? The blue blood of all the Osbornes fairly bubbles in my veins at the mere idea. How-

ever, we do need a pair of shoes so tremendously that I'll pocket my pride, assume a little of your cheek, and go ahead."

Gifford soon saw Herbert returning, waving triumphantly a pair of old boots.

"I found the kindest, nicest old lady up there you ever saw," said Herbert. "She seemed quite surprised that I refused her offer of 'cold victuals.' I accepted a drink of milk, though, and it was delicious, I tell you."

"Ha, I would n't object to a drink of milk, myself," said Gifford.

"Virtue is not only its own reward," said Herbert, "but once in a while it gets outside appreciation, as in this case. If you had condescended to beg for the boots, you would have had the milk. Hereafter, carefully follow my example, and you 'll be all right."

Herbert, during this speech, was pulling on the boots, by no means a perfect fit, their rough angles being only a degree less painful to his feet than the edges of the rocks. He toiled along with the canoe over and among the rocks, while Gifford tramped alongshore, bearing the luggage, barefoot, of course, as the frequent

exigencies of the "Black-eyed Susan" obliged both boys to be ready to leap into the river at any moment.

They now found themselves in a peculiarly wild, beautiful, but lonely region. True, the stage-road to Goffstown ran near the river, but was evidently little frequented, and they saw neither vehicle nor traveller. How still it was! How remote they felt from the far-away world! The stillness and loneliness were pleasing to Gifford's quiet, romantic nature; but Herbert soon felt it oppressive, and endeavored to cheer his flagging spirits, and beguile his labors, by singing.

"My heart 's in the Highlands, my heart is not here;
My heart 's in the Highlands, a-chasing the deer,"

he shouted, and up through the recesses of the silent hills all about echoed faintly, "Deer, deer, deer!" fading gradually away in an indistinct murmur.

"Boston Highlands, I presume," said Gifford.

"Never you mind. My heart and I understand each other. The fact is, Gif, I know you're pining to wear these delightful boots,

and there is nothing mean or selfish about me; I'm always ready to oblige a friend."

"Well, I'm ready for a change," said Gifford.

Scrambling down the bank, he found Herbert engaged in a hand-to-hand struggle with the "Black-eyed Susan," that jaunty craft, with the wilfulness supposed to be inherent in her sex, seeming determined to impale herself on the sharp edge of a rock, toward which the strong current in the main channel bore her. The river bottom was broken and slippery, affording the old boots but an uncertain footing. Herbert, slipping and struggling with the canoe, broke forth with Tennyson's "Brook Song": —

"I slip, I slide, I gloom, I glance,
Among my skimming swallows,"

when out went his feet from under him, and prone he lay on his back in the Piscataquog, which seemed to laugh maliciously as it rippled along over its stones.

Gifford hastened to help him up, and together they rescued the "Susan" from her own undoing.

"You'd better be more careful, or you'll 'gloom' more than you mean to," said Gifford.
"You'll 'go on forever' in earnest."

"I am a damper and a wiser man," said Herbert, solemnly.

Pulling himself up the steep bank, he broke off a stout stick. Upon this he suspended the valise and carpet-bag over his shoulder, carrying the blankets, etc., in a big roll under one arm. Gifford laughed.

"I'd give something to have Bessie Temple and the other Roxbury girls see you now. You look as if you had just landed from 'the old country!'"

"Ditto, ditto, yourself!" said Herbert. "'A man's a man for a' that, and a' that.' I'm going in the road, Gif. It's easier walking, and there's no danger of meeting any one along here."

"All right!" said Gifford, as he bent his back to his task.

Herbert's clothes, as well as Gifford's, already bore witness, in various rents and stains, to the vigor of their exploits. Marion's box of thread and needles had been lost overboard at one



of their first dams. Their feet and legs were bare, the dust of the road adhered to their wet clothes, and an old slouch hat, much the worse already for its adventures by "fell and flood," was set far back on Herbert's head for greater coolness. Altogether his appearance was what he himself would have described as "seedy."

A dense growth of bushes along the bank here concealed the road from the river. As Gifford plodded along the river-bed, suddenly he heard the unexpected rattle of wheels, and the next moment Herbert dashed through the bushes, flushed and laughing.

"What is it?" asked Gifford.

"I met the New Boston stage! Came right around the turn upon me, before I had time to dodge! It was full of people,—summer boarders, I suppose; I noticed a lot of big Saratoga trunks strapped on behind. There was such a pretty girl aboard,—an out-and-out beauty! She looked at me as if she thought me one of the banditti peculiar to this wild region, who might attack the stage-coach with my band,—give a signal, you know, and all my desperadoes leap out from behind the bushes, like Roderick Dhu.



If you had only happened to come up out of the river just then, the effect would have been complete. I should have liked to see her when her horrified eyes fell on your grim visage."

"Don't flatter yourself, Bert, that there's any such dash of wild romance in your looks. She thought, more probably, that you were about to beg for pennies, ready to call down a choice selection of Irish blessings or curses on her head, as the result should warrant."

"Well," said Herbert, candidly, "I admit that had she seen you, she might reasonably have thought so. A light-complexioned, yellow-haired youth gone to seed looks simply dirty and disreputable. But about your fine, dark, dashing fellows like me,—ahem!—there's always an air of having seen better days, a spice of romance, something fascinating to the last!"

"Cherish that illusion while you can," said Gifford, laughing. "But now have done with your nonsense; we must be pushing on. The afternoon's wearing away, and the sky is clouding over. We must try to find some good stopping-place for the night."

"So he took up the burden of life again,
Only saying, 'It might have been!'"

said Herbert, in accents of deep pathos, as he shouldered his budgets and tramped on, listening, like *Æneas* on the house-top, "with erected ears," for the sound of wheels.

No more vehicles came along the unfrequented road that night, however. The sky grew darker, the air damper, and the robins sang as is their wont just before a rain-storm. The great hills among which the Piscataquog wound, loomed up around them, gray and sombre. The stillness, the loneliness, grew more intense.

Herbert's mercurial spirits, which often soared so high, and sometimes went equally low, now began to sink. He was tired, hungry, depressed, half ready to vote the much-longed-for canoe trip "the biggest sell on record." Raspberry-bushes, laden with ripe fruit, grew all along the roadside. Herbert dallied along, appeasing his hunger with berries. Presently a shout came from down-stream,—

"Bert! Bert! Where are you?"

"Coming! I say, Gif, let's camp here to-

night. It's dry and sandy,—a good place to sleep."

"Come along," was the only answer from the river-bed.

Herbert's progress was slow, however, his sluggish pace matching his flagging zeal, while the temptations of the berry-bushes were too great to be resisted.

Finally Gifford, who in his fatigue felt the loneliness and isolation surrounding them as sensibly as Herbert, stopped, and sat down on a stone in the river, until Herbert should appear.

Herbert came laggingly into view, much stained about the mouth and finger-tips with the life-blood of countless raspberries.

"I tell you what, Bert," said Gifford, with some warmth, "it's rather lonely plodding along here all by myself."

"It is too bad, Gif, I admit," said Herbert, a little conscience-smitten. "I'll keep along beside you, after this. It's mighty lonely along here, is n't it?" he added, after plodding on a few moments in silence.

"It is, indeed."

"Seems to me, Gif, this so-called canoe trip

of ours is n't exactly what you 'd call an out-and-out success. For a straight, hand-to-hand, never-say-die wrestle with rocks, mill-dams, and starvation, it's immense."

" You don't want to back out, do you? "

" No, sir-ee !

'The king of France, with twenty thousand men,
Marched up the hill and then marched down again ;'

but you and I, Gif, are not that sort of fellow.
I propose to fight it out on this line, like General
Grant, if it takes all summer."

" Good for you, Bert ! " said Gifford, delighted
that Herbert's feelings agreed with his own.
" We 'll go on, then, to the bitter end, ' sink or
swim, live or die, survive or perish.' I agree
with you that more water and less rocks would
improve this sort of overland passage we 're
making down the bed of the Piscataquog."

" I 've had about enough of it for one day, I
know that ! " said Bert. " I should think it was
about time to stop for the night."

" I know it is," said Gifford. " I 've kept
on, thinking we must surely come to a house
soon. It 's growing dark. We must turn in
somewhere."



At this point, a man suddenly stepped out from the bushes close by them. The boys were startled, both at the suddenness of his appearance when they thought themselves so far from all human kind, and by the uninviting aspect of the man himself; he being a rough, ugly-looking fellow, evidently much the worse for liquor.

Across the road, so hidden in thick under-brush that they had not noticed it in the gathering darkness, they now perceived a dilapidated shanty. To add to the boys' dismay, another man now joined the first, even more drunken, filthy, and evil-looking than the first.

The boys having, as Gifford afterwards said, unlimited faith in the virtue of all natives of New Hampshire, put a brave face on, and asked:

"Can we get lodging anywhere about here for the night?"

"Oh, ya-as, we 'll keep ye. Kin keep ye well's not. We live right over here."

The boys did not eagerly accept this cordial invitation.

"Is n't there any other house near here?" they asked.

"No. The nighest house is two miles or more below here."

The boys hardly knew what to do. To go on two miles farther was impossible. It was already dusk, and a cloudy night, threatening storm. The Piscataquog was not a stream they could paddle on in the dark. They consulted together, uncertain what to do in this lonely, rather dubious situation.

"We kin fix ye up a sort o' bed somewhere," said the first man, who seemed unduly anxious that the boys should land.

"Can we get you to-morrow morning to take our canoe down the road a ways in a wagon until we come to deep water?" asked Gifford. "We've been dragging it along through shallow water and rocks all day, and we are nearly tired out."

"We will pay you well," added Herbert, rashly.

The two men exchanged glances of low cunning.

"Oh, ya-as," said the second comer, in thick accents; "we'll take ye along, if we kin git our wagin fixed. Some — rascal's broke our

wagin, — him! If I ketch the feller that done it, I'll break every bone in his — body, — him!" And he muttered on in senseless, drunken rage, glaring at the boys, evidently disposed to charge them with breaking the wagon.

The first man continued urgent that they should come ashore.

"Come up here and jest look at our wagin," he said, "and see if it'll answer your turn if we kin fix it. It's right up here in the bushes. I'll keep ye all night. Come along!"

He whispered to his comrade, and they retired into the bushes, as if for consultation, to arrange their plans.

The boys had now grown very suspicious of their new friends. They held a hurried council.

"I don't like their looks," said Gifford, "and they are altogether too anxious to take us in. We are alone, in their power. I wonder what we'd better do."

"I think," said Herbert, "our best plan is to hide our money somewhere, and get out of the way before they come back."

There was little time for consideration. Gif-

ford felt that Herbert's suggestion was a wise one, under all the circumstances.

Hurriedly digging a hole in the sand of the river-bank, they buried their money, rolling a peculiarly marked stone over it to define the spot, left the canoe stuck fast among the rocks, and fled. Seizing their luggage, they splashed through the river, scrambled up the opposite bank, and into the bushes out of sight, ere their would-be captors reappeared.

On dashed the boys, up across a steep hill-side pasture, constantly hearing close at their heels imaginary pursuers in their own echoing footsteps. The cattle in this remote mountain pasture, startled from their quiet grazing by this sudden invasion, threw heads and tails up, and galloped wildly away as fast as did the boys, but in an opposite direction. As Herbert panted on, he wondered if there was not a bull among them, who might perhaps take a fancy to join in the chase. But the cattle, considering themselves pursued rather than pursuers, kept on to remote heights beyond, where they stood with erect heads and startled eyes, like hunted deer watching the enemy from afar.

The boys struck across the hillside to some woods, which offered a favorable place for concealment. Reaching the woods, they stopped to listen. The only sounds were the sighing of the night-wind through the pines and the dashing of the river far below.

"I think we are safe here," said Gifford. "We can easily outrun them if they don't come upon us unawares."

"We'd best cut some big sticks," said Herbert, "and be prepared to defend ourselves in case of attack. They are hard-looking characters, and a good deal bigger and stronger than we, but so besotted with liquor we could probably worst them if we had a fair chance to start with."

Some good-sized cudgels were cut, and laid close at hand.

"Now, let us see if there is still anything to eat in that bag," said Gifford, "and then we may as well turn in for the night."

After making what Herbert truthfully described in his journal as "a frugal meal" of water-soaked crackers and berries, they spread the invaluable rubber blanket among the ferns

in the edge of the pine wood, and lay down upon it, with the two woollen blankets over them, and their valises for pillows. But the night-air up here on the mountain-side was cold, penetratingly cold, and both boys were sleepless in their unusual surroundings. As they revolved restlessly, first Gifford had all the blankets, then Herbert.

"Look here, Bert," said Gifford, finally, "this arrangement is n't going to work. We shall be frozen before morning. You roll yourself up in your blanket, and I'll take mine and do likewise. Now, good-night, and pleasant dreams to you, old fellow."

"The same to you," said Herbert. "I wish the folks at home could peep in on us just now. What would Aunt Senie say?"

Herbert was now in fine spirits, elated by a sense of the novelty, romance, and adventure of their situation. It was long before either he or Gifford fell asleep. Their ears were strained to catch every noise. Far down on the road below them they heard the faint sound of a voice calling, once or twice. Then a wagon seemed to drive a little way along the

road, turn, and come back again. Their excited fancies heard their pursuers in these sounds, as well as in every twig that snapped under the light tread of fox or rabbit prowling through the wood on harmless midnight errands of its own.

The night was dark and starless, the leaves rustled, the wind sighed mournfully through the pine branches like the distant moan of ocean surf. Now and then some bird, rocked too violently perhaps in its swaying nest, twittered a sleepy note or two, and then subsided. The damp night-air was full of wild, pungent odors of pine needles, sweet-fern, pennyroyal, dry, sweet, mountain herbage. And still the boys rolled and tossed, wide awake, but saying nothing to each other.

Finally Herbert asked, cautiously,—

“Are you asleep, Gif?”

“Not much!” replied Gifford. “Do you suppose I prance about in this way when I’m asleep?”

“I did n’t know but you might be fighting those rascals in your dreams,” said Herbert. “I don’t believe I shall ever go to sleep.

Every time I close my eyes I see rocks and water."

"And raspberries?" suggested Gifford.

"Well,—yes, now and then a berry," admitted Herbert, candidly.

But gradually, as the boys grew calmer, and their hearts beat less rapidly, they yielded to their great fatigue and the soothing influences of their surroundings. Deep sleep fell upon them, and they slumbered as sweetly on the bosom of the earth as two tired children in their mother's arms. Herbert's record for this third day was:—

"Grist-mill to villains' shanty, four miles.
Ten miles from starting-point."

CHAPTER VI.

A DAMPER.

HERBERT awoke about four o'clock the next morning, the lap of Mother Earth not proving so conducive to prolonged slumber as a spring mattress.

"What a racket the birds are making!" he thought, as he lay still, rolled up in his blanket, too lazy to stir as yet. "Must be a pleasant morning."

But what was that suspicious patter, patter, on the leaves overhead; and was not that a drop of water that fell on the protruding tip of his nose? Yes, it actually was raining, raining hard and fast, though only an occasional drop dripped through the thick canopy of leaves above them.

"This *is* jolly!" thought Herbert. He nudged Gifford, saying,—

"Come, Mark Tapley, here's a chance for you to rise to the occasion and be jolly. It's raining hard. A jovial situation, take it all around, is n't it ?"

"Well, you did n't expect the sun was going to shine straight on through the trip, did you?" asked Gifford, his native obstinacy coming to the rescue, and helping him to put the best face possible on an unpleasant situation. "'Variety's the spice of life,' you know."

"If those men found our money last night, or stole the 'Susan,' we shall be in a pretty fix. What are you going to do in that case?"

"Like Lincoln, I don't propose to cross a bridge until I come to it. If we find everything all right, this is my plan for to-day. You know they told us at the mill that there was a farmer along here somewhere named Harrison, who would probably take us in. I thought we should reach his house last night. We will push on there, and stay until it stops raining. But the first thing to be done is to get some breakfast."

The boys tried to start a fire under the lee of the pine wood, but could not; so they were

fain to content themselves with crackers and berries.

"What a hollow mockery to call this breakfast!" exclaimed Bert, as the loathed cracker stuck in his throat.

"What would you give now for a genuine home breakfast?" asked Gifford, tantalizingly; "say a juicy tenderloin, baked potatoes, hot biscuit, and a cup of our mother's coffee? Strawberry shortcake would n't be bad, either."

"Gifford," exclaimed Herbert, "don't trifle with a desperate man! I might develop cannibal propensities. A man is capable of any frenzy after a steady diet of crackers for a week."

The boys rolled up their luggage in the rubber blanket for protection, and emerged from the shelter of the woods into the pouring rain.

"Either the birds are egregious humbugs, or they really enjoy this kind of weather," said Gifford.

The woods, trees, and bushes all around echoed with rippling, joyous bird-songs. The wet air was deliciously redolent of wild perfumes drawn out by the rain, the fragrance of wet

bark and dripping leaves, of aromatic pasture herbs and grasses. The wet morning had a beauty all its own. But the boys, lame, tired, hungry, and shelterless, uncertain about the fate of their money and canoe, were in no mood to be enthusiastic, as they plodded downhill in the rain.

Far down below them wound the Piscataquog among its green hills, which from the boys' vantage-point were seen to rise picturesquely all about it, range upon range, though their summits were hid this morning by low-lying mist.

As they went on, down the mountain-gorges swept white sheets of rain, driving more furiously against them, until soon they were thoroughly wet, literally to the skin.

“Oh, the gentle, gentle summer rain!” quoted Herbert, the rain dripping from the drooping rim of his slouched hat, and trickling over his face and down his neck.

“It looks and acts like serious business,” said Gifford. “No joking about this; no let-up to-day, if I’m any prophet. But keep up your spirits, old fellow! We shall strike food and

shelter soon, I'm sure; and when we do, we will not desert them till the prospect brightens."

"Oh, I'm jolly, immensely jolly," said Herbert, grimly. "I never was so jolly in my life before."

They struck the river below the place where their money was buried. Wading the stream, they advanced cautiously up its shore, under the shelter of the bushes. No signs of the enemy appeared. Reaching the stone, they dug for their money and found it all right, perfectly dry in its sandy bed. The "Black-eyed Susan," too, lay safe and sound among the rocks, exactly as they had left her.

Their spirits revived at finding their worst fears unrealized.

"We wronged our friends last night," said Gifford. "They were not so bad as we fancied."

"They were bad enough for anything," said Herbert, "only they were too drunk to carry out their intentions. Do you know, Gif, I feel uncommonly like the good and great Captain Kidd, 'as he sailed, as he sailed,' digging here for hidden treasure on a sandy beach. And

last night, when we were hiding it, I could n't help thinking of, —

‘They buried him darkly, at dead of night,
The sods with their bayonets turning,’

only it didn't seem just the time to quote poetry.”

“So you refrained from your refrain,” said Gifford, in the best of spirits. “Well, we are all right now. ‘Put but money in thy purse,’ as the wicked Iago advised, and you can face the world boldly. We'll leave the canoe where she is for the present, and push on for Harrisons’.”

After walking about a mile down-stream in the rain, carrying their baggage, at last a comfortable farm-house greeted their anxious eyes. The boys felt that everything depended on their reception here. If they were refused shelter, their outlook was gloomy indeed, as the rain poured harder than ever, and no other house seemed near.

Approaching the barn, they found a young man milking, it being yet early morning, even for farmers. After a brief history of their adventures, they anxiously inquired if they would be allowed to sleep in the barn that night.

"Why, of course," said young Harrison, heartily. "Sleep here and welcome. And come right along into the house now. Breakfast is just ready, and the folks'll be glad to have you sit right down with us."

This was an invitation not to be refused. Changing their wet garments for some of the dryer ones in their valises, they were ready to follow their new friend and his milk-pails toward the kitchen. Behind his back, as they walked along, Bert contrived to nudge Gifford joyfully, and whisper,—

"Be careful and not eat too much, Gif, this first meal. Might scare 'em, you know."

"If your prowess does n't alarm them, mine certainly will not," replied Gifford, laughing.

Luckily there was a bountiful breakfast prepared, of ham and eggs, and such delicious coffee and bread and butter as it seemed to the half-starved boys they had never before tasted. Their warm and evidently most sincere praises of her cooking quite won old Mrs. Harrison's heart; and after breakfast, as the boys sat around the kitchen stove, drying their things, the internal satisfaction of a good breakfast

and the delightful sense of warmth and comfort after their privations, made them so jolly, so full of jokes and fun, that both Mrs. Harrison and her daughter were quite charmed with them.

"I declare," said the old lady to her daughter after the boys had gone to the barn, "I don't know when I've laughed so much. My sides fairly ache. Ain't they full of it, though? They seem to be real nice, gentlemanly young fellows,—two as nice boys as I ever set eyes on. I'll warrant their mothers are worryin' about 'em every blessed minute. I believe, Amanda, I'll make some of my currant-pies for dinner. I should n't wonder if the boys would enjoy them."

The boys had not been at the barn long with the Harrisons, when who should appear but the milder of the two vagabonds they had encountered the previous evening. He came, jug in hand, to get some hard cider,—a beverage of which he had evidently already drunk too much. He seemed not over pleased to meet the boys again, and muttered something threateningly about the smashed wagon as he shambled

off with his empty jug, which the Harrisons had refused to fill.

It seemed that the more sinister-looking fellow had, about a year ago, in a fit of drunken rage, stabbed this one, and fled the country. Now he had returned to visit his friend, and they were again boon companions. When the boys related their experience with this promising pair, young Harrison said: —

“They are a very hard lot, and it’s lucky you kept away from them. The selectmen ought to ‘tend to ’em, unless they succeed in killing each other off soon. It would be a good riddance to the community if they did.”

The rain pounded hard on the gray roof of the old barn, and the boys loafed about there all the forenoon, talking with the Harrisons, and enjoying an agreeable sense of well-earned rest and leisure. The summons to dinner found them promptly ready, and their keen appreciation of all Mrs. Harrison’s good things, especially the pies, was most satisfactory to that good lady.

In the afternoon the rain held up, and the boys improved the chance to go up the river

and bring the "Black-Eyed Susan" down near the Harrisons'. Soon after supper they found themselves in mood for bed and sleep. Climbing some pegs in a beam to the top of the big hay-mow in the barn, they lay down on the soft, fragrant new hay, and covered themselves with their blankets, which Mrs. Harrison had carefully dried.

After their repose on mill floors and the cold, cold ground, sinking down into this soft couch seemed the height of luxury.

"Civilization is a sham," said Gifford. "Only think how wretched some people make themselves because they want this or can't have that fancied necessity! When you come down to the actual necessities of life, they're mighty few. Now, what would you have more luxurious and comfortable than this?"

"Nothing," murmured Herbert, drowsily,— "only peace to enjoy it in. I'm half asleep now. 'Let us have peace.'"

The raindrops were again pattering briskly on the roof close over their heads,— a drowsy music that soon soothed the boys into the deepest, sweetest sleep. And although Her-

bert had been obliged to enter in his journal, "Shanty to Mr. Harrison's, one mile; from starting-point, eleven miles," still both boys were agreed that it had been a most satisfactory day.

CHAPTER VII.

ON, DOWN, AND IN.

THE next morning, Gifford was awakened by a bright ray of sunlight, which, streaming through a heart-shaped hole in the end of the barn, shone full in his face.

"Hallo, Bert! Wake up! Wake up!" he cried, shaking Herbert vigorously. "It's awful late, I'm afraid."

Herbert came to life slowly at first, but, once thoroughly aroused, and made sensible of his whereabouts, was wide awake and ready for business.

They slid down the mow to the barn floor. The big doors facing eastward stood wide open, and the sun streamed broadly in, its long bright rays full of dancing motes and golden dust from the hay. An old rooster, the patriarchal head of a large flock of industrious hens, was strutting

about the barnyard, now calling his meek tribe to work, now mounting a post and sounding shrill clarion notes of defiance to whomsoever it might concern. The air was sweet and fresh. It was a perfect summer morning, and all the world was in a bustle of active happiness, ready, like the boys, to begin life afresh after the storm.

The boys ran a race to the house, wherein Gifford's longer legs made him victor "by one length" only, as Herbert said. Finding the family already seated at breakfast, they made hasty toilets at the tin basin standing on the ledge by the mossy old trough at the back door, into which gurgled from a pipe the clear waters of a mountain spring, brought down from its far-away hillside to serve household uses. Wiping themselves in most democratic fashion on the long roller towel behind the kitchen door, they joined the family at the breakfast-table, looking so rosy and fresh and boyish that they won Mrs. Harrison's heart all over again, and she pressed delicious hot griddle-cakes and maple syrup upon them, until even Herbert was obliged to own that there was a limit to human capacity.

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In vain, after breakfast, did they try to pay their kind host and hostess.

"We don't want a cent," said Mr. Harrison. "We've enjoyed your visit first-rate, and you're welcome to all you've had."

"You must come and see us again, some time," said Mrs. Harrison; "and if it ain't too much trouble, I wish you'd just drop us a line after you get home, and let us know how you come out. And here's a bag of my doughnuts, and some cheese. I'm afraid this frying of doughnuts ain't quite so good as usual; but perhaps they'll come in handy somewhere."

The boys were quite sure they would, and thanked Mrs. Harrison many times over for all her kindness. And so, with the most cordial expressions of good-will on both sides, and promises on the boys' part to come again some time, hearty good-byes were exchanged, and the boys set forth again on their adventures.

"I hope there won't nothin' happen to 'em," said Mrs. Harrison, as she stood, shading her eyes with one hand from the sun, and watched the

boys down the river until out of sight. "They're as nice, friendly boys as I ever set eyes on."

The boys did not forget to write to Mrs. Harrison after they reached home; and the next winter, life in the lonely farm-house was often brightened by the arrival of copies of "Life," "Puck," "Harper's Weekly," etc., sent by the boys.

It was a fresh, delightful morning, and the boys felt full of "go," after the refreshing rest and "square meals" enjoyed at the Harrisons'. The rain had swollen the river perceptibly, although at first the old boots had now and then to come into play to aid the "Black-eyed Susan's" progress. But the boys worked with a good will which made all obstacles seem small. The scenery about them grew wilder and more picturesque. The Piscataquog's sparkling waters, fretted into thousands of miniature cascades by its rocky bed, wound among grand hills, or rather mountains, looming up bright and near in the pure air this morning. The sky was a deep, cloudless blue, the air full of ozone. Gradually the river grew deeper. Then, as Bert entered in his journal, "began some glorious fun."

The paddles flew in and out, and away shot the "Black-eyed Susan," as light as a feather, cutting swiftly over the water, the long wake of ripples she left behind breaking up the pictured sky and mountain and overhanging trees mirrored in the clear Piscataquog. So delightful, so like flying, was their motion, that Bert in his exhilaration broke out into song, and made the hills resound with: —

"A wet sheet and a flowing sea —
 A wind that follows fast,
And fills the white and rustling sail,
 And bends the gallant mast,—
And bends the gallant mast, my boys ;
 While, like the eagle free,
Away the good ship flies, and leaves
 Old England on the lee."

"I say, Bert," interrupted Gifford, "your doll is n't stuffed with sawdust now, is it?"

"Not so much as it was. This is something like it. Is n't it simply great?" And he trolled another lusty stave: —

"Oh for a soft and gentle wind !'
 I heard a fair one cry ;
But give to me the snoring breeze,
 And white waves heaving high, —

And white waves heaving high, my boys,
The good ship tight and free ;
The world of waters is our home,
And merry men are we."

"I would n't object to having the fair ones of Roxbury see us now; would you, Gif?"

"Not a bit," responded Gifford, as he made his paddle fly.

The river was diversified to-day by numberless riffles, the water deep enough to enable the boys to shoot them. As they guided the slender canoe skilfully through the roaring, tumbling water, there was just sufficient sense of danger to be agreeably exciting. At noon they reached West Goffstown bridge, where they found a high dam, but fortunately also some men at work near by, who kindly took hold and helped carry the "Susan" around it.

Their brisk exercise in the fresh morning air had sharpened the boys' appetites, and they were not long in discovering a favorable place for lunching, by the side of a cool spring that gushed from the hillside near by, its course down into the river marked by a strip of brighter verdure where its waters trickled, unseen, through

grass and ferns. The boys sat in the green shade of the trees overhanging this spring, and found Mrs. Harrison's doughnuts and cheese "a luncheon fit for a king," as Herbert pronounced it.

"Yes," assented Gifford, "especially if the king had been paddling a canoe and shooting rapids all the morning."

"What unearthly name did those men call these mountains?" asked Herbert, looking up to the high mountains looming up conspicuously near them.

"The Uncanoonucs. It's an Indian name. All this region was a favorite haunt of the red men of the forest. Our canoe isn't the first that has glided down the 'Sparkling Water,' for that is what the Indian name 'Piscataquog' means. Mother and I were looking over Whittier's Poems, after we had decided on this trip, and we found them full of allusions to the old Indian legends connected with this region, and the Merrimac, especially. Here's a bit bringing in these very mountains,—

'Green-tufted, oak-shaded, by Amoskeag's fall
Thy twin Uncanoonucs rose stately and tall,
Thy Nashua meadows lay green and unshorn,
And the hills of Pentucket were tasselled with corn.'"



"There's a fine swing to that," said Herbert, lying on the hillside, complacently munching a doughnut. "It's almost as good as I could write myself."

Luncheon over, the boys were soon afloat again, and before long came to some rapids that looked really dangerous. An ugly rock poked its nose out of the water at the end of the rapid.

"Are we off?" asked Herbert, looking excitedly at Gifford.

"Why not?" answered Gifford, with a resolute glint in his blue eyes.

In silence, with faster-beating hearts, the boys shot into the foaming waters of the turbulent rapids. The canoe tipped and dipped, now this way, now that, and just grazed the rock, but strongly and skilfully guided, shot out safely at last into the clear water below.

Herbert stuck his paddle over his shoulder, Gifford seized it, and the boys gave a wild yell of triumph that must have reminded the Uncanoonucs of good old Indian times.

"Nothing like pluck, is there, old boy?" said Herbert. "I didn't think we should make it that time."

"There's no use stopping for trifles," said Gifford.

The next obstruction interrupting the smoothness of their voyage was a high dam, built in a rocky locality,—a dam which they would have hesitated to attack in the beginning of their trip. But now, emboldened by success, they undressed, unloaded the "Susan," and managed to lower her over the dam, and slide her gradually down a smooth, broad rock into the river, which was roaring along here at a fearful rate. The boys had come to feel quite at home with and indeed *in* the Piscataquog. But intimate as they considered themselves with this sparkling river, they were destined to what may well be called a deeper acquaintance ere this day was over.

They now shot rapidly along down-stream, and were looking forward to the time when they should glide smoothly along the deep waters of the Merrimac, and be able, as Herbert said, to "throw the old boots overboard to the mermaids." The canoe, being stanchly built, had held out wonderfully so far on her peril-fraught voyage; but in grazing the rock, it had sprung

a small leak, and the boys were obliged to stop occasionally and tip out water, which not only delayed them, but gave them some anxiety about the canoe's holding out.

Herbert had grown quite reckless with their rapid motion and successful running of rapids, and dashed ahead, regardless of Gifford's remonstrances that there was still need of caution. As a natural consequence, they soon found themselves stranded on a flat rock, whose surface lay just below the water.

"There, what have I been telling you?" cried Gifford.

"Oh, this is nothing; I can push her off easily," said Herbert, leaning over and bracing his paddle against the rock, giving so vigorous a push that he not only pushed the canoe off the rock, but almost tipped it over, shipping, as it was, enough water to wet their luggage uncomfortably.

"Now see, Bert," remonstrated Gifford. "If you go on in this reckless way you'll stave in the canoe, the next thing. Be more careful, can't you?"

"Don't know. I'll try," said Herbert, in an

off-hand way, waking "the sleep that lies among the lonely hills" with snatches of song.

The long summer day was now waning to its close. The sun was already sinking behind the westward mountain-tops, and dark shadows fell on the river where it flowed along under the green gloom of overhanging alder and willow. It was a lonely region. Now and then a "plump" into the water, and a wide-spreading circle of ripples, showed that they had disturbed some solitary muskrat in his seldom-visited haunts; or a startled bittern flew up from the river and away, dark against the radiant light of the western sky, its wild cries giving the boys a peculiar sense of far-away loneliness.

They still hoped to make Goffstown Centre that night. It was Saturday, and they had planned to spend Sunday there. But these hopes were, as Herbert afterwards wrote in his journal, "destined to be damply disappointed." As they paddled swiftly on in the gathering dusk, they became aware of moving forms on the river-bank ahead.

"These human forms divine," as Herbert joyfully announced them to Gifford, proved, on

nearer approach, to be a small boy and his dog. The boy carried an old shot-gun over his shoulder, while two squirrels, borne by the tail, showed that he had been making the most of his Saturday afternoon.

The sound of voices caught his ear, and he stopped, all agog at this unwonted vision of canoe and canoeists; while the dog bounced along the edge of the bank, barking furiously, in a violent state of excitement.

"Be still, Tige!" cried his small owner; and when the dog was subdued, this conversation followed:—

"Hullo, Bub!"

"Hullo, yourselves!"

"Where are you going?"

"Goin' home. Been a chipmuckin'"

"How far is it to Goffstown Centre?"

"Dunno. 'T ain't very fur."

"Is there any house near here where we can stay over Sunday?"

"There's a house back here a piece. P'raps they 'll take you in."

This information seemed so vague, the boys thought they would push on a little farther, and

see what developed. The small boy and the dog kept up as well as they could, hopping and running along the bank, the boy showing his unmistakably Yankee origin by the brisk fire of questions he poured forth, inquiring into every detail of the trip, the boys' names, where they were from, where going, and so on. By and by it occurred to him to give them a bit of valuable information.

"Oh, say," he called, "there's some falls down here!"

"How far down, should you think?"

"Oh, I dunno. 'T ain't fur. A piece."

"How high are they?"

"Bout fifteen feet, I guess."

"Straight down?"

"N-no, not *exactly* straight."

"Think we can scale them?"

"You might; but you might tip over."

The boys judged it best to push on and examine for themselves. Soon the roar of the falls greeted their ears.

It was now almost dark, but the boys were extremely anxious to reach Goffstown Centre that night, and their success in shooting rapids had

made them both, especially Herbert, quite reckless, and disposed to take almost any risk to get on. So they swept swiftly on down-stream, the small boy, in a state of rapturous expectation, prancing along the shore, bound to be "in at the death."

He was. Suddenly the "Susan" struck a rock, unseen in the darkness, and all was literally over,—over into the water! The canoe capsized so suddenly that both boys were thrown violently out, and disappeared in the white water, but soon reappeared, dripping and sputtering. The small boy capered on the bank in a rapture of delight. This was beyond his wildest expectations. The falls roared loudly, and so did the boy; while his dog, feeling the general excitement without understanding it, ran wildly up and down, barking furiously.

Luckily the "Susan" lay against the rock, athwart the river, facing up-stream, so that many floating articles lodged against it, and were thus saved from going over the falls. The waters were whitened far and near with Herbert's wooden toothpicks, which had so often seemed a bitter satire on their meagre diet. Crackers

and doughnuts bobbed about on the relentless bosom of the Piscataquog, strewn all about with débris of various kinds.

Gifford and Herbert did not waste much time in remarks. They clutched wildly whatever they could grasp, waded ashore with it, and back for another load. The bottom of the river being covered with large round stones and slippery rocks, while the current was running at full tilt, the boys found it hard to keep their foothold, and slipped and fell more than once as they struggled to and from the shore.

Gifford secured the dark-lantern, but gave it a wild toss to the shore, in his excitement, where, landing on a rock, it was broken into a hundred pieces.

Suddenly, in the dim light, Gifford saw his best, his only pair of shoes floating away downstream. He was on the shore.

“Catch those shoes! Quick, Bert, catch those shoes!” he shouted frantically, in tones heard above the roaring of the falls and Tiger’s barking. Bert made a wild clutch, slipped and tumbled down, but secured one shoe. The

small boy ran alongshore with a long stick, poking and reaching, in imminent danger every instant of tumbling into the rushing water, but all in vain. The other shoe went over the falls, and was seen no more. One of the paddles had also floated off, and a joint of Herbert's fish-pole. These were the only important losses, but bad enough, the boys thought.

They hauled the "Susan" up into a safe place for the night. In the darkness, it was impossible to see how seriously she had been damaged. The salvage from the wreck was concealed behind a big rock, and taking only their blankets and valises, the boys, under the friendly guidance of 'Bijah, — for such they learned was the small boy's name, — struck inland for the house that was "back a piece." Hungry, cold, and dripping, feeling anxious about the "Susan's" condition and the loss of the paddle, to say nothing of Gifford's shoe, the boys walked silently along at first, rather dispirited. But when they came to an unusually high rail-fence, the natural boy cropped out again in Herbert. He thought he would astonish 'Bijah.

"See me do this gracefully," he said, laying his hand on the top rail, meaning to vault over in one grand bound.

But somehow his foot caught, and he fell clumsily with all his weight into a sand-pile on the other side. 'Bijah laughed long and loud, but Gifford was anxious at first lest Herbert might be hurt. His only injury, however, proved to be the thick coating of sand that adhered to his wet clothing, and his spirits, being stimulated by this adventure, now rose to high tide, and he beguiled the way with so many quips and pranks that 'Bijah's wonder and admiration grew every moment greater.

Arrived at the farm-house they were seeking, their knock was answered by a careworn, lank, discouraged-looking woman, behind whom trailed an indefinite number of children. This did not seem encouraging, nor did the woman's startled look, as by the flickering light of the candle in her hand she descried these two decidedly rough-looking strangers.

In response to their inquiries if she could keep them over Sunday, or even over night, she said decidedly: —

"No, I can't keep no strangers over night. We're all sick. Six of my children have got the whooping-cough, and I'm jest gettin' over it myself. Why, is that you, 'Bijah Jackson?" she exclaimed, catching a glimpse of their guide in the rear. "What did you bring 'em here for? Why did n't you take 'em down to your father's tavern?"

"Does your father keep a tavern?" asked Gifford. "Why did n't you tell us?"

"Did n't know's you'd want to go so fur," said 'Bijah. "You asked if there was a house near by, and this was the nighest."

Near or far, to go to the tavern was evidently their only course. After what seemed to their tired legs a weary tramp in the darkness along a dusty country road, they came to an old tavern whose best days had evidently passed away long ago, with the era of stage-coach travelling. Glad of any haven, however, the boys went in, and after drying their clothes as well as they could by the kitchen fire, had supper,—not a Delmonico repast exactly; but the boys were in no mood to be fastidious, and ate heartily of the homely fare.

Immediately after supper they went upstairs to their bedroom. Such a room they had never seen. The floor was not only carpetless, but very uneven, waving up and down in wooden billows, so to speak, and so worn by the coming and going footsteps of many years, that each knot stood up prominently, a little hillock. On the rickety bedstead was a soggy feather-bed, covered with a dingy quilt; while the rumpled pillow-cases suggested that possibly they might not have been changed since last used. It was also somewhat embarrassing to find the door off its hinges.

"Well," said Herbert, looking with a comical air of resignation at Gifford, whose fastidiousness he well knew, "explorers must not be too particular. Very likely Stanley, in some African hut, may have fared worse than this."

"Perhaps," said Gifford, doubtfully. "But to tell the truth, I am so dead tired that if this bed does n't totally collapse and go down when we get in,—as I expect it will,—I believe I can sleep in spite of everything."

Propping the door up as best they could, the boys quickly shed their raiment, and with great

caution climbed into bed. The bedstead creaked ominously, and keeled over upon one leg, but otherwise stood firm. It being the boys' first night in a bed since their start, they slept soundly, although at first much disturbed by dreams of rocks and rapids, of rushing river and overturning canoes. Once, indeed, Gifford seized Herbert roughly. Herbert, wakened from sleep by this onslaught, naturally resisted, and the two rolled out upon the floor.

"What *are* you up to?" asked Herbert.

"I don't know," said Gifford, wondering where he was. "Oh, yes, I know. I dreamed we were just plunging over the falls, and I wildly grabbed at a big rock."

Herbert's journal read:—

"Mr. Harrison's to tavern in Goffstown, six miles. Seventeen miles from Francestown."

CHAPTER VIII.

TO MANCHESTER.

THE boys awoke rather early the next day. The morning sun, streaming brightly in at their curtainless window, shone full in their faces, rendering further sleep impossible. With the curiosity which one always feels to view by daylight the unknown surroundings amid which he has arrived in the darkness of the previous night, they looked out of the window.

The first thing that greeted their eyes was a huge old-time sign, much the worse for wind and weather, hanging from the trunk of a stately great elm beside the tavern, bearing the words, "Uncanoonuc House." All around rose picturesque green hills, that might more properly be called mountains. The fresh morning air blew in at the windows, sweet with all country odors of field and meadow, of grass and leaves

and flowers. Every little bird's throat was rippling over with trills and quavers and runs of liquid music, the very air seeming to quiver with melody. No one passed along the quiet country road. A Sunday sense of peace and quiet brooded over this remote nook.

"This is n't a bad world to be in, is it, Gif?" said Herbert, leaning out of the window and breathing in long breaths of the sweet air.

"No; nor a bad morning to be alive in," said Gifford. "Do you know, if we had not capsized just when we did last night, I doubt some whether we should be here to enjoy it."

"All my doing," said Herbert. "Give me the credit of saving you from a watery grave."

Their chamber door being off its hinges, as related, the boys were considerably embarrassed, while making their brief toilets, by the sound of some one evidently peeping in at them, and then scuttling away down the long hall. Herbert lay in ambush, and finally succeeded in capturing the intruder, who proved to be their friend 'Bijah, he having evidently been undergoing a struggle between his sense of propriety and an overpowering curiosity. He remained

close by, escorted them down to breakfast, and indeed tagged faithfully at their heels all day.

The boys made a hearty breakfast of baked beans; being not only Boston boys, but also, as Herbert wrote in his diary, "Naturally hungry for anything that was not crackers."

They then walked up to the spot where they had left the "Susan," to inspect her condition. When they came upon the scene of the wreck, Herbert exclaimed:—

"Never say we were not born under a lucky star! The water is so deep here, and the current so strong, that in one minute more we should have been carried over these high falls in the darkness, and ten chances to one our brilliant career would have ended then and there."

"You're right," said Gifford. "It was a most fortunate accident. Another stroke of luck was that I left my rifle at home. It would have gone to the bottom, sure. The loss of our paddle is the most vexatious part of the whole business."

"Can't we whittle out a piece of board as a makeshift?" asked Herbert.



"I suppose we shall have to," said Gifford.

To the boys' delight, they found the "Susan" surprisingly little damaged, considering all she had undergone, her injuries only such as they could easily repair. While they were examining the canoe, 'Bijah and his dog were prowling about below the falls. 'Bijah now emerged from the bushes, shouting,—

"Say! See here! See what I've found!"

Sure enough, in his hand was the lost paddle, which had lodged in an eddy below the falls. This was a great stroke of luck, and made the boys feel that, on the whole, they had come out of the wreck in much better shape than they could have expected.

They spent the rest of the morning writing long letters home, and also to Sue and Bessie, wherein their various adventures lost nothing by the telling. As dinner-time drew near, 'Bijah gave them this friendly warning:—

"I say, you'd better look out and eat lots of dinner to-day, 'cause we don't have any supper Sunday nights."

What the boys, in their character of shipwrecked mariners, found a very good dinner

was served, roast lamb and pie being its main features. Down the long table in the dining-room knives and forks were plied in solemn silence, with an earnestness that showed all to be mindful of the supperless prospect ahead. Every now and then the silence was broken by 'Bijah, who, passing up his plate for another helping, said in a plaintive whine, "I want some more laayom." But when the pie appeared, Gifford insisted that Herbert came out ahead of 'Bijah by one piece.

After dinner, the boys lounged around the deserted bar-room, trying to find something to read. They had of course not heard from home since they left Frantestown, nor had they seen a newspaper, and they felt that great events might have been happening in that bustling world of which they were once a part. But they found only some dirty and fly-specked old weekly papers; so they strolled out to a pleasant hillside sloping down to the Piscataquog, and lying there, in the shifting shadows of a wide-spreading maple, lazily watched the cloud-shadows floating peacefully down the mountain-side, until the drowsy rustling of the leaves,

and the murmurs of the river lulled them fast asleep.

'Bijah, meantime, prowled about, now picking berries, now skipping stones across the river, and once slyly slipping into the canoe when he saw that the boys were fast asleep, and pleasing his imagination by voyaging, in fancy, to distant climes familiar to him in his geography, but never, under any circumstances, long losing sight of his heroes.

On the whole, the day, if not exciting, passed very pleasantly, and the boys arose Monday morning, rested, and more eager than ever to resume their adventures by "flood and fell." Their host charged them only a dollar apiece, which the boys felt moderate enough, in view of their immoderate appetites. He also went up with them, and helped carry the "Susan" around the falls.

As the boys paddled off down-stream, 'Bijah and his dog stood mournfully on the shore and watched them until out of sight. 'Bijah had hinted that if urged he might be induced to bid home and friends farewell, and go with them; and the boys had some difficulty in con-

vincing him that a crew of two fully manned the "Black-eyed Susan," and that there was absolutely no room for a second mate.

'Bijah, like the miller's little boy, found his only comfort in secret resolves to have a canoe of his own, just like the "Susan," when a man.

"And I'll eat more, if I can," he thought, "so's to grow big faster."

The boys encountered another dam, near Goffstown Centre. That passed, came a stretch of deep, clear water, purling along over a clean, pebbly bottom, plainly seen below as they glided above it. They were passing through a lovely country. As the boys swept joyfully on down-stream, their laughing voices and dipping paddles startled into flight more than one lonely heron, standing pensively on one leg in the edge of the water, watching for fish, and sent the muskrats "kerchunk" into the stream, all along their route. Or a bittern flew up and away from some shady nook, his long legs hanging awkwardly down, his loud "qua-ak" resounding through the woodland solitude.

Once they came swiftly around a bend in the high, wooded bank, upon a herd of cows

standing knee-deep in the cool, rippling water, dreamily chewing their cuds. At the sudden and alarming appearance of the canoe in their midst, they scrambled out, and galloped clumsily off up the hillside pasture, the "kling-klang" of the bell on the leader's neck chiming fainter and fainter, as the boys swept on down-stream.

When they came to a deep, still pool overhung by the thick shade of the woods on the shore, Gifford said,—

"This is irresistible. Let's have a good swim, Bert."

"Agreed!" cried Bert, only too gladly shedding his few garments, and plunging in.

So delicious was the sensation of floating and splashing about in the clear, cool water, that it was hard to tear themselves away from such delights, don clothes, pick up paddles and to work again, especially as now the sun, high overhead, poured down a fierce midday heat. The boys' appetites needed no reminder that it was high noon, and dinner-time. They scanned the banks anxiously, and felt themselves fortunate when at last a farm-house loomed up not far from the shore.

Beaching the canoe, they walked toward the house. On the grass in the shade north of it were stretched three men in shirt-sleeves, evidently enjoying an after-dinner rest. They stared in surprise at the strangers approaching.

"Can we get some dinner here?" asked Gifford, adding the usual formula, "We are canoeists; we are paddling down the river. We can pay for it." He was aware that he and Bert, barefooted, and in canoe undress already much the worse for wear, might not unreasonably be taken for penniless tramps.

Such was indeed the case. The men continued to stare in silence. Finally one of them said: —

"She'll give you something, I guess," indicating, by a sideways nod of his head, which rested on his joined hands, a woman standing in the back door, also staring, full of curiosity, at these unexpected guests.

Bert always declared that "she" was the tallest, lankest, leanest specimen of womankind ever seen outside a dime museum. But he also said he should ever remember fondly this Only Living Female Skeleton Extant. For did

she not bring forth a royal plate of biscuits, a plate of butter, a pan of milk, and a pie? And did not the boys sit on her north doorsteps and eat it all, except the pan and the plates?

Their hostess stood by, and plied them with questions as they ate, frequently interrupting their answers by such exclamations as, "Dew tell!" "The land's sake!" "Mercy on us!" "The sakes alive!" till finally Herbert was fain to excuse his no longer repressible laughter by attacking Gifford.

"I wish Sue Fox could see you now, Gif, sitting on this doorstep, with that hat on the back of your head, putting down that triangle of pie! You're a study for an artist. 'Drink fair, Betsey, wotever you do!'"

And then Bert laughed again.

"What a fule you be!" said their hostess, admiringly. "I never see the beat on ye."

She charged only a quarter for the dinner, and she and the boys parted, mutually satisfied with their entertainment, their hostess's monotonous life temporarily brightened by memories of "them boys from Boston," and their jokes.

Gathering clouds had gradually obscured the

brightness of the day, and now the dull gray sky, the dampness in the air, the maple-leaves turning up their white under-surfaces in the east wind, all indicated rain, which soon began to fall. The boys, however, were now too amphibious to mind a little water.

"Aren't you afraid of spoiling your good clothes, Gif?" asked Herbert; "that hat of yours might be injured."

"I guess mine can bear it if yours can," said Gifford, looking laughingly at the battered semblance of a hat poised on Herbert's head with a decidedly don't-care-for-anybody air. "The fact is," added Gifford, "when we are going like this, I don't care whether it rains or not."

They were having one of their best stretches of swift water, and went spinning down-stream gloriously, leaving a long, rippling wake behind them on the dimpled surface of the river.

Late in the afternoon they reached a place rejoicing in the name of Squog, where at first they thought of spending the night, but not finding the outlook for comfort very flattering, finally decided to push on farther. To their surprise, not long after leaving Squog, they sud-

denly came out into that long-delayed haven of their hopes, the Merrimac.

"Well, here we are at last!" exclaimed Gifford, joyfully.

"Yes, here we are!" said Herbert. "I declare, Gif, it seems too good to be true. The Merrimac has seemed like a far-away dream, that we should never realize."

"Digging is what tells in the long run," said Gifford. "See, even old Sol celebrates our success!"

The clouds had broken, and the sun, low down now in the west, sent out a flood of golden light, glorifying the beautiful scene that lay before the boys' admiring gaze. They thought that never before had they seen so lovely a view. Before them rolled the broad river, its tawny flood, golden in the sunlight, stretching far away to the south, into those unknown regions whither to-morrow their journey lay. On their left, as they turned up-stream, was the Piscataquog; while above them lay the city of Manchester, seen under the span of a fine railroad-bridge. Nearly opposite them dashed down a series of terraces a foaming cataract

thirty or forty feet high, where the water from the Manchester canals is returned again to the Merrimac. Thoreau says of these falls: "They are striking enough to have a name, and, with the scenery of a Bashbush, would be visited from far and near."

And now the yellow sunlight made every dripping bough and bush flash with trembling diamond-drops, threw a fleeting rainbow across the cataract's spray, and set all the birds joyfully singing, while the air was full of a delicious, cool fragrance after the rain. No wonder the boys were filled with joyful excitement. Besides, they confidently expected to find their first letters from home waiting for them in the Manchester post-office.

They paddled rapidly up-stream toward Manchester. After considering the situation, they decided that the safest place to leave the canoe that night was to fasten it to a pier of the railroad-bridge. So Hérbert put Gifford on shore, then undressed, took the "Susan" out to the pier and secured her, swam ashore, and remade his simple toilet; then the boys walked up into Manchester.



Meeting a man on the way, they asked him:

"Can you tell us of any place where we can get cheap lodgings for the night? We have just come down the Piscataquog in a canoe."

"Oh, be you the fellers?" asked the man, regarding them with new interest.

"Why, yes; but how did you know about it?" they asked in wonder.

"Why, I saw a notice of it in the 'Mirror.'"

Here was unexpected fame.

"Evidently the reporter haunts even the wilds of the Piscataquog," said Gifford.

"Good joke!" said Herbert. "We must have been interviewed some time when we did n't mistrust it!"

They hastened to buy copies of the "Mirror." There were some of the usual inaccuracies of detail. They were said to be Lowell boys, who had been attending school in Francestown. Still, the boys sent carefully marked copies home, and to various girl friends.

Greatly to their disappointment, they found no letters in the post-office. It seemed months, rather than days, since they left home. Writing their own postal cards, however, they took an

inexpensive supper at a Holly-Tree Inn, and then began hunting for cheap lodgings. Some places at which they inquired were not good enough for them; at others, it seemed they were not deemed good enough for the places, as they were regarded suspiciously, and given abrupt refusals, with an air that implied, "We may be cheap, but we don't take in tramps."

Finally, when the boys were almost in despair, they found a small lodging-house kept by a quaint little old lady, who came to the door holding a kerosene-lamp in her hand. By its light flaring in the night wind she too scrutinized suspiciously through her spectacles the shabby clothes, the dilapidated hats, and Gifford's shoeless foot. But something in the open, boyish faces, the pleasant voices, seemed to soften the old lady's heart; for after her scrutiny was ended, she said slowly: —

"Well, I guess you're pretty good kind o' boys, after all. You can come in. I'll give you a room for a quarter apiece."

The boys were only too glad to accept this offer. The little room to which she showed them was so scrupulously neat, so really fra-

grant with cleanliness, the bed so comfortable, that it is no wonder Herbert wrote in his journal that night before turning sleepily in: —

“ Our accommodations are absolutely sumptuous! Made to-day from Uncanoonuc House to Manchester, nine miles. Twenty-six miles from starting-point.”

CHAPTER IX.

THE CANOE LOST.

A BRIGHT and beautiful morning dawned, after the rain, and the boys, refreshed by a good night's rest, and animated by the prospect of voyaging on the Merrimac, rose full of eager hopefulness.

They found the "Black-eyed Susan" safe and sound where they had left her, swaying in the current and tugging impatiently at her rope, apparently as eager to be off and away as her masters. As they swept down past the mouth of the Piscataquog, Herbert said, half regretfully:—

"Good-by, old Piscataquog! We've had more than one stout tussle with you, and have come off second-best sometimes. But I forgive you all now."

"So do I," said Gifford. "Do you know, Bert, I should be sorry if I thought I should

never see the Piscataquog again,—the Indians' 'Sparkling Water.'

Canoeing on the Merrimac was as different as possible from the same sport on the Piscataquog. They made rapid progress, however, for the first time enjoying the delight of going at their utmost speed uninterruptedly. As the day wore on, it proved as hot as the morning had promised, and the boys began to pine for a swim. By and by they came to a place where some logs, floating down-stream, had caught and piled up on a great pier of logs built in the river. They were crowded and jammed together in one great, chaotic mass. The river ran deep and clear each side the pier, while the spot was delightfully shaded and shut in by trees and bushes.

"Here's our chance," said Gifford.

"Just the spot for a good swim," said Herbert.

Tying the "Susan" to a log, the boys undressed, congratulating themselves on being able to leave their clothes on the clean, white logs, skipped gayly out along the pile of logs as actively as two young monkeys, and dived head foremost into the deep water. It was glorious

fun, but the water was decidedly cold, so that they were soon satisfied, and scrambling up the logs, began to dress.

The boys did not suppose that their comparatively light weight could disturb the equilibrium of the logs, they were so huge, and seemed so tightly jammed together. But just as they were sunning themselves complacently, and just as Herbert had put on his clean, dry shirt, somehow a log started, and then all the logs loosened, and began to roll and tumble.'

Both boys were badly frightened. Herbert's active imagination saw his legs crushed among the rolling logs. Giving a cry of horror, he sprang wildly into the water. Gifford, equally frightened, but of less impulsive temperament, scrambled about briskly until he found safe refuge upon some stationary logs. Then the absurdity of Herbert's forced bath in his clean shirt struck him, and when Herbert emerged, dripping, but safe and sound, Gifford was holding his sides laughing, and Herbert soon joined him.

Herbert found that one of his shoes had disappeared among the rolling logs. Worst of all,

an immense log lay jammed down across the bow of the canoe. This was bad enough. The boys feared that their efforts to start this log would set the rest rolling down upon them, yet it must be attempted. They tried cautiously to stir it, but it was impossible. Then they got into the stern of the canoe and tried to lift the log; but this only pressed the bow more closely up against it. When they pushed the boat down, the log went with it. Finally, with the energy born of despair, they gave a Herculean tug. The log raised, the canoe freed herself with a jerk and capsized, throwing both boys into the water.

This was Herbert's third bath in the cold river. As they came up, seized and righted the canoe, and scrambled aboard, all dripping, Gifford said,—

“Just the spot for a good swim, was n't it, Bert?”

“I should say so,” said Herbert. “I've had all the swimming I want for a while. If I don't find my shoe, Gif, fancy the figure we shall cut, each with only one shoe, like ‘Hey diddle diddle, my son John'!”

But farther down-stream, luckily, they overtook the lost shoe sailing peacefully along by itself. Just at noon they came to a beautiful island, which divided the river into two streams.

The boys hailed the island with delight, and landed with an agreeable sense of being its first discoverers, and, in a measure, its proprietors. They ran the "Susan's" prow into the sand, and finally drew her well up the beach.

"The Merrimac is not so frisky a stream as our old friend the Piscataquog," said Gifford; "yet the river god might be tempted to play us a trick, and elope with the 'Black-eyed Susan' if we should give him a chance."

Under some maple-trees they built a fire, partly because it seemed the proper thing to do on an island, and partly to toast their cheese, which, spread on thick slices of the delicious fresh bread, made a most acceptable luncheon.

"Gifford," said Herbert, as he made a semi-circle of incredible size in his slice of bread and cheese, "this life just suits me. The Indians were old wise-heads. They knew how to

get the most pleasure out of existence. Who would n't be an Indian?"

Gifford was toasting cheese on the end of his jack-knife. "I know one thing," he said. "I'm not pining for the Latin School at present."

"Latin School! Don't mention it!" cried Herbert.

"Speaking of Indians," said Gifford, "don't you remember when Mrs. Dunstan and her nurse were taken captive at Haverhill they were brought to an Indian camp on an island in the Merrimac, somewhere along here? Perhaps this is the identical island that ran red with Indian blood when she scalped the ten Indians in their sleep, and then fled down the river in one of their canoes."

"It is a pleasing fancy!" said Herbert, sarcastically. He was lying stretched out in the maples' shade, his head pillow'd on his long-suffering hat, in an agreeable mood of after-dinner laziness that made him disposed to prolong their tarry.

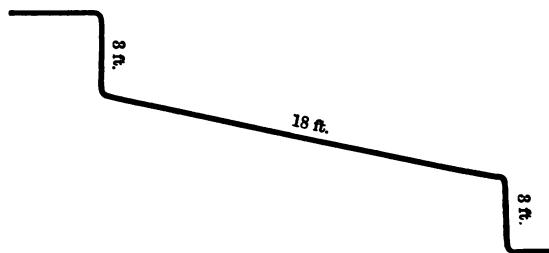
The boys enjoyed a delightful siesta on their island. But suddenly Gifford sprang up, saying, "If we hope to reach Nashua to-night, as we

planned, we shall have to paddle fast to make up lost time. Come on, Bert!"

"We're just rushing this trip, are n't we?" said Herbert, tearing himself up reluctantly from his fascinating resting-place.

They were soon off once more, and now made rapid progress, spinning along down-stream with lusty sweeps of the paddles.

Along in the afternoon they came to an apron dam. The popular impression that it takes a deal of experience to teach boys even a little caution, was fully verified by the boys' further proceedings, in spite of their little adventure of the logs.



The height of the dam was about ten feet, but the force of the fall was broken by three descents. The water fell from the top about three

feet to a sloping platform of logs eighteen feet wide, called the apron, and then made another straight jump to the river-bed below.

The boys leaped out to discover the easiest way of making a carry. But at sight of the apron, they exclaimed in one breath,—

“Why is n’t this shootable?”

Their wildest expectations had never, as yet, risen to the height of shooting a dam. But this really looked feasible, and both were fired with ambition to try it.

They asked some boys, who had stopped their fishing from the pier to watch their movements with undisguised interest, whether any one had ever shot this dam, and learned that canoeists had generally carried around it.

They were agreed, however, that it would never do to miss such sport as this. They chose a place where plenty of water poured over the flashboard, lest their canoe should stick there and capsize, and also where the river-bed below looked fairly smooth, though a few rods from the foot of the dam the water was badly churned up by rapids. As the apron would not, of course, be visible up-stream, they

sighted this place carefully by a tall pine which stood in a line with it down-stream, and then re-embarked, paddling up-river some distance to get a flying start.

Every nerve and fibre set and tense with excitement, they sped down with a rush for the dam. The "Susan" took the flashboard like a duck, just grazing it, but in no way retarded, coming over with a swoop like an eagle, taking the apron with an even keel, sweeping across it in magnificent style, and making a superb leap into the river-bed below. Her bow ducked far below the water-line, under the waves, and for a moment she seemed wholly submerged. Another instant and she righted herself, laboring heavily, but still afloat.

With a wild yell of triumph, the boys put her nose to the nearest bank, and in half a minute more were gazing back in breathless exultation at the dam down which they had just made this flying leap.

"The greatest moment in my life!" exclaimed Gifford.

"Glorious! I never felt such a delightful sensation!" said Herbert.



Below the dam were the worst rapids the boys had yet encountered. The water was white from beginning to end, signifying treachery, as they well knew. The rocks were there. Though they might be a foot below the surface, the white water had no buoyancy, and the canoe would sink through it to the rocks. Running along the bank and reconnoitring, they saw that there was only one course,—to keep just to the right of an ugly black ledge of rocks that projected, a sharp edge, above the foaming water.

Having tipped the water from their canoe, the boys entered the rapids with faster beating hearts, aiming for this point. In a moment they were in the swell of the current. The whirling waters seemed to seize them with irresistible force. But not so. Many a rock was just avoided by a deft sweep of the stern paddle in Gifford's hand. Herbert jammed his paddle with all his energy against an ugly rock, upon which it seemed they must certainly come to grief, keeping the canoe from dashing against it, while Gifford, backing water, brought the stern around, so that they rushed safely by their foe,

instead of stranding. Every nerve was strained to the utmost. There was hardly time to think. In less time than it takes to tell about it, they were safely through, and the canoe was dashing about in the breakers below the rapids.

Here a new danger beset them. The breakers were so high that the "Susan" shipped water constantly.

"One more breaker, and we should have had to swim for it," said Gifford, after they had paddled their water-logged craft to the shore with much difficulty.

"I've had about enough sport for one day," said Herbert, wiping his face.

Everything went tamely after this, and they reached the mouth of the Nashua River near sundown, without further adventure.

Wishing to go up to the Nashua post-office, they beached the "Susan" in a secluded nook.

"I don't believe any one will find her there," said Gifford. "But we will take our luggage ashore, and hide it in that clump of bushes, as a precaution. I vote we take the paddles too, Bert."



"Oh, what's the use!" said Herbert. "No one's going to touch the canoe!"

"This is a very different locality from the lonely Piscataquog region," said Gifford. "But perhaps it is safe enough to leave them."

Going up through a grove near by, toward the post-office, the boys encountered a group of young roughs, who showed the disposition of the Northumberland natives, as depicted in Punch's well-known picture, "'Bill, there's a stranger.' 'Is there? Heave a rock at him.'"

Despite the bedraggled aspect of Gifford and Herbert, some subtle instinct seemed to tell their new acquaintances that these boys belonged to another class,—the class supposed to be ready to "put on airs" at the slightest provocation.

"Hi! See the city dudes!" they cried, and picking up stones, began throwing them, and calling offensive names.

The boys' muscles were in prime order, nor were they deficient in pluck. Black eyes and blue eyes flashed, and they advanced so resolutely that the roughs skulked off, muttering all sorts of threats as they retreated.

This little breeze put the boys in better spirits, which were still further elated by finding, at last, letters from home for each. And each, too, had a large square envelope bearing the latest device in monograms, directed in the slashing, dashing style of penmanship peculiar to the young lady of the period! The home letters brought only good news, with abundance of warm love, and innumerable cautions and warnings; while from the others they learned what a terrible void their departure had made in all the Roxbury sailing-parties and picnics, with much other information of deep interest.

What warms the heart with a happier glow than loving letters from loving friends? The boys were as happy as kings are popularly supposed to be. They acknowledged the home letters then and there with brief but characteristic postal-card messages, that were sure to be read at home with proud smiles at the brightness of "our boys," reserving the others for more elaborate replies.

Procuring a modest supper, they returned to their landing-place, having decided that it was

best to camp for the night in the grove, near their canoe.

It was now quite dark. Though neither confessed it, both felt some uneasiness for the safety of the "Susan," after their encounter with the roughs. As they neared the junction of the rivers, Herbert quoted in melodramatic fashion a bit of Whittier: —

"But hark! — from wood and rock flung back,
What sound comes up the Merrimac?"

The loud plashing of paddles, indicating their use by awkward hands, the sound of voices receding in the distance, were indeed plainly audible through the darkness.

"It will be no laughing matter for us, Bert," said Gifford, anxiously, "if that canoe's been taken."

"Oh, there's no danger. We shall find her all right," said Herbert, assuming more confidence than he really felt, "bluffing off fate," as he called it.

Arrived at their landing-place, they groped anxiously about in the darkness. Their luggage was behind the bushes, as they had left it, but

the canoe was gone! In vain did they grope and search up and down the shore. The dear old "Black-eyed Susan," their friend and comrade who had shared their joys and perils like a living creature, was gone,—fallen perhaps into rough hands, that would ill use, abuse her. Unmanly though they would have felt it, the boys could almost have cried.

"I wish now that I had hidden those paddles," said Herbert, sorrowfully. "It's an awful shame!"

"There's no help for it now, as I see," said Gifford. "The only thing we can do is to wait until morning, and then do our utmost to get track of her."

They took their luggage up into the grove, rolled up in their blankets, and lay down for the night in a silence and depression of spirits that formed the greatest possible contrast to their late gayety. The remembrance of their letters no longer cheered them, and the fact that they had made sixteen miles that day,—forty-two miles in all,—and had shot an apron dam, did not elate them. They lay in gloomy silence, listening to the mournful howling of the east

wind through the trees, the dreary "lap, lap," of the water against the bank. A gradually thickening haze crept up from the river all about them, until not a star shone through the dense darkness. Dogs barked persistently not far away, their remarks taken up, magnified, and repeated by all the dogs in Nashua, apparently. An occasional passing footfall echoing loudly in their ears, as they lay on the ground, suggested the possible return of the roughs on a midnight foray; and worse than all was the anxiety they suffered about the "Susan." On the whole, it was but a wretched night.

CHAPTER X.

THE MERRY MAIDEN.

THE boys woke from their troubled sleep at the first dawning of daylight. It was a gray, gloomy morning. A thick white fog enshrouded everything in its ghostly mantle. Every bush and leaf dripped with moisture, and all weather indications said plainly, "Look out for rain about this time."

The boys, lame and unrefreshed after their restless night, were in a state of spirits that harmonized with the grayness of the morning. They searched up and down the river-shore in a last hope of yet finding the "Susan." Where she had been tied, the trampled shore and footprints in the mud showed but too plainly that she had been stolen.

"Well," said Herbert, finally, "there's no use in looking farther. She's gone. Now, what are we going to do?"

"I suppose we shall have to take the cars for home," said Gifford. "It's a downright shame. We have got on capitally, so far, and the trip was a splendid success. Now, to make such a fizzle as this,—flat out and go home in the cars! It's more than I can bear! And to lose the 'Black-eyed Susan'!"

Meantime, the fog was lifting a little, and they could now see across the river.

"Great Scott!" said Herbert, suddenly, as they stood mournfully beside the Merrimac, its gray flood rolling along in gloomy hues that matched the world around it. "What's that?"

Was it possible? A canoe was seen dimly emerging from the fog down-stream.

"Good enough!" exclaimed Gifford. "It is the 'Susan'! Now for it! We will not give her up without a struggle."

The boys waited quietly until the canoe was opposite them. Then they hailed the big, rough-looking fellow who was clumsily paddling her.

"Here! what are you doing with that canoe?" shouted Gifford.

No answer.

" You can bring it back this instant. Oh, I know you, and I'll have you arrested in about five minutes if you don't bring that canoe here now!"

Great is the power of moral right. The fellow was bigger and stronger than either Gifford or Herbert, and had he chosen to resist, they would have been decidedly nonplussed. But he knew that he was in the wrong. To their great joy he turned the prow toward shore and paddled up to them. As he stepped out of the canoe, he said sulkily,—

" Sam Jones told me he bought the boat of you fellers for five dollars. I borrerred it of him to go a fishin' in."

" Too nebulous," said Gifford. " Tell that story to the marines."

Only too glad, however, to recover the canoe, they did not stop to bandy words with the fellow, but hastened to load up and get away as soon as possible from this disagreeable locality. Like some other travellers, they generalized from limited observations, and decided that Nashua was a most unattractive place, upon which they were glad to turn their backs.



The recovery of the "Susan," after they had given her up as lost forever, was a piece of good fortune that raised their spirits to high tide again. The little canoe, with which they had shared so many ups and downs, was really "loved for the dangers she had passed." They resolved to be very vigilant hereafter, and run no risks of another such disaster.

The early morning air now made them conscious of aching voids within, and they let the canoe drift while they breakfasted on some ham sandwiches, their only souvenir of detested Nashua. Meantime, the fog, after considerable vacillation, finally thought better of it, and as the sun mounted higher grew gradually less dense, then broke and floated away in fleecy shreds and remnants up the hillsides, dissolving at last, and vanishing in the deep blue of the sky. The sun's rays seemed doubly brilliant and beautiful in contrast with the gray, damp morning; but their heat promised a very warm day for paddling. The boys, however, pushed on undismayed, in glorious spirits, feeling "All's well with the world," since they had recovered the "Susan."

The descent of the river was now less rapid. It widened, and became at once more imposing and slower, seeming now to lay aside the wild impulsiveness of youth to assume the dignity of maturity. As they paddled on, Herbert sang the old-fashioned ballad, —

“ Flow gently, sweet Afton, among thy green braes,
Flow gently, I'll sing thee a song in thy praise.
My Mary's asleep by thy murmuring stream ;
Flow gently, sweet river, disturb not her dream.”

Only, in delicate compliment to his comrade he changed the Mary to Susan.

While the strains of this ballad quavered high on the summer air, “ linked sweetness long drawn out,” as Gifford sarcastically observed, their attention was attracted by the singular conduct of a cow in the field they were passing. She pranced clumsily along the bank above them, evidently following the canoe, drawn by some unknown but irresistible attraction, and seeming in much agitation of mind.

Gifford burst into laughter.

“ Bert,” he said, “ you are a second Orpheus. I apologize. I have n't appreciated your musical genius. See that cow. Evidently your

strains have thrown a spell over the poor beast. She is literally enchanted. I don't doubt all the fish in the river are swimming in our wake, and all the birds of the air will soon be flying in dense clouds over our heads, if you don't hold up."

"No," said Herbert, "you're mistaken. We must have crossed the State line. That cow is none of your common cows. She is a Massachusetts cow,—a cow of culture, feeling, earnestness. Probably she sings a little herself, among her friends. At all events, evidently *she* has a cultivated ear. *She* knows a good thing when she hears it."

And so joking, the boys paddled on, paying little attention to the cow, which still followed them. Their early and meagre breakfast, and the increasing heat of the sun, as well as their harder work in the now sluggish current, disposed them for rest and dinner at the first favorable opportunity. So they were now glad to see an attractive-looking farm-house, standing some way back from the river across the pasture. It was old, but well preserved. Its mossy roof sloped nearly to the ground in the rear. Up

and down its venerable clapboards the sunlight glinted fitfully through the hanging boughs of some grand old elms. In the side yard towered up a sloping well-sweep, that took the boys' fancy at once.

"Here's the very place we've been looking for," said Gifford. "Let's land and try for dinner here.

'Here where the beechnuts drop among the grasses,
Push the boat in, and throw the line ashore.'"

"All right," said Herbert. "Those ham sandwiches have reminded me of Josh Billings's saying that if he could only have enough salt mackerel for breakfast, he could make his other two meals that day of cold water. I expire for a drink, — especially a drink from

'The moss-covered bucket that I have no doubt hangs in that well.'"

"*Don't sing, Bert,*" said Gifford. "Don't you see you're stirring up that cow's sensibilities again?"

Indeed, their friend the cow stood on the shore, watching their movements with the liveliest interest.

"Oh, never mind the cow," said Herbert, going ahead. "She's all right. She and I understand each other."

"I shall take a paddle ashore all the same," said Gifford; at which excessive caution Herbert laughed.

The boys landed, and ignoring the cow, struck straight across the pasture for the house. Herbert, who was some distance ahead, had already reached the fence, when, turning around, he discovered that the cow had no intention of being quietly ignored. The fact that Gifford wore a red jersey had no doubt attracted her attention to the canoeists. She had lowered her head and come furiously on, determined to dispute the passage of her territory.

Gifford's obstinacy was roused by this wholly uncalled-for conduct on the cow's part. So he stood his ground, retreating slowly backward across the pasture, facing the cow, and warding off her assaults by a vigorous use of the paddle, while Herbert sat on the fence, laughing, and shouting:—

"‘ Beware the Jabberwock, my son !’
‘ The Jabberwock, with eyes of flame,

Came whiffling through the tulgey wood,
And burbled as it came :'
'One, two ! One, two ! And through and through
The vorpal blade went snicker-snack !'

Two to one on the cow!" and the like.

Gifford was too absorbed to pay much attention to this chaffing. Round and round he and the cow whirled, the cow surrounding him on all sides, as it were, Gifford plying his paddle with a skill that would not have discredited the matador of a Spanish bull-fight. Finally, as he neared the fence, he gave the cow one last thrust, dropped the paddle, darted to the fence, laid one hand on it, and vaulted lightly over into the bed of sweet-fern where Herbert now lay rolling with laughter, having tumbled off the fence.

"And hast thou slain the Jabberwock ?
Come to my arms, my beamish boy !"

he cried, rising, and affecting to embrace his friend.

"Pshaw !" said Gifford, shaking him off, laughing ; "have done with your nonsense, Bert. At least, I did not run for her !"

Gifford was too heated by his recent active

exercise to be in a mood for congratulations. He now noticed, too, that there had been other witnesses of his prowess. In the front door of the farm-house stood an old lady and a very pretty young one. The old lady looked anxious, while the young lady's pretty brown eyes danced with ill-concealed mirth.

At this unexpected sight Herbert instinctively gave a furtive poke of adjustment to the place where his hair would have been, had it not been so closely "lawn-mown" before starting on the trip that only a mouse-colored gray stubble was left.

Gifford glanced in dismay at his feet, shod with one shoe and one old slipper, and, conscious that a blazing red face does not improve the charms of a yellow-haired youth, blushed an even deeper scarlet, by way of helping the matter, turning with an instinctive impulse to retire to the canoe and depart dinnerless, rather than face a pretty girl in such guise.

But the old lady addressed him at once, full of anxious sympathy.

"That pesky Betsy's been a pesterin' of you ! I declare, it's too bad ! I don't know what ails

her once in a while. She never could abide red. I tell father he'll have to kill her, or she'll do some mischief yet, in one of her tantrums. Be you hurt any?"

Gifford assured the kind old lady that he was uninjured, and that, in the language of Mr. Toots, it was "of no consequence," and could not refrain from maliciously adding,—

"The cow's excitement was quite natural. She has been listening for some time to my friend's singing."

"You don't say so! Why, I did n't know 's she minded music!"

"I presume she does n't," replied Gifford, dryly; whereat the old lady looked puzzled, and the young one giggled, while Herbert felt a strong desire to punish Gifford.

"Well, it's too bad. Come into the settin'-room and cool off, and I'll git you something to eat. The men-folks all carried their dinners to-day over into the mowin', so I want calculatin' to git much to eat this noon. Thought I'd have cold b'iled-dish."

The boys at once intimated that "cold b'iled dish" was the very thing for which they pined;

and the old lady departed to prepare dinner, leaving Gracie, as she called her, to entertain the boys in her absence.

Young people get acquainted rapidly. By the time the boys had recounted the story of their adventures, their worn raiment was no longer something to be ashamed of, but rather the best of jokes, at which they all laughed together; and when dinner was announced they were quite old friends. Herbert paid off old scores against Gifford by insinuating that he was the identical

“Man all tattered and torn”

who had met and overcome in single combat

“The cow with the crumpled horn.”

Though he proceeded no farther in his quotation, both Gifford and Grace blushed, and began hastily talking about some Boston friends they had discovered each knew well.

Grace was certainly a remarkably pretty girl. Her hair was of the genuine Titian golden hue, her complexion that of infantile pink and white freshness, which always goes with such hair, while her eyes were a dark brown, such as are

usually called black. Her home was in Worcester, and she was spending part of the summer vacation on her father's ancestral farm with her great-aunt.

The fact that she was somewhat older than the too impressible Herbert did not lessen her fascinations in the eyes of that fickle youth, and Gifford had some difficulty in tearing him away, even after an unduly prolonged nooning.

"Do you want to get sunstruck, Gif, paddling in such a sun as this?" he remonstrated.

Finally Gifford insisted that they must go, if they would reach Lowell that night, as they had hoped.

The most cordial good-byes were exchanged all round. The boys crossed the fateful pasture without again encountering the musical Betsy. As they glided away down-stream, there was much waving of hats to the distant front door under the elms, whence a white handkerchief fluttered as long as they were in sight.

They paddled on for a while in silence, Herbert looking rather pensive, and finally heaving

a portentous sigh, whereat Gifford unfeelingly laughed, and said,—

“Poor Bert! Perhaps it would relieve your feelings to sing something. I don’t see any cows around.”

“Did you hear her say, Gif,” said Herbert, quite oblivious of his friend’s raillery, “that she knows Alice Poindexter, and is to spend the Christmas holidays with her in Roxbury?”

“Oh, then there is hope,” said Gifford. “And how about Bessie Temple? It’s a clear case of

‘How happy could I be with either,
Were t’ other dear charmer away!’”

“Bessie Temple is abundantly able to take care of herself,” said Herbert, adding his opinion that Grace was “an out-and-out stunner,” which fact Gifford did not attempt to dispute.

The canoe had now rounded the great bend in the Merrimac, and was no longer going south, but due east. The afternoon sun beat hotly on their backs, and their long nooning had belated them. So on every account the boys were thankful to accept the offer of some friendly fellow-navigators of the Merrimac to “hitch on behind” their craft. It was a flat-boat, pro-

pelled by steam, loaded with gravel for Lowell. Towed rapidly along by this boat, the "Black-eyed Susan" glided easily, if somewhat ingloriously, down-stream; while the boys lay back,

"Rocked in the cradle of the de-eep,"

as Herbert roared, to the vast entertainment of the flat-boatmen, resting their weary backs and "horny hands," as they well called those much-enduring members.

"This is regal," said Herbert. "Cleopatra in her barge was nothing compared to this."

"Yes, I supposed this sort of canoeing would just suit you," said Gifford, as they floated royally on in the wake of the flat-boat.

Thanks to its assistance, they reached the entrance to the canal above the Lowell dam in the gloam of the summer evening.

Concord River flows into the Merrimac a little below Lowell, but navigation is facilitated by a series of locks leading from the Merrimac, above the dam, into the Concord. The Merrimac swept on most invitingly seaward, and the boys bade it farewell not without longings to follow it to the end. But their plans for the

trip took them up the Concord, so they now prepared to enter these classic waters.

At the head of the first lock they found the keeper's home to be a particularly neat, inviting little place. On asking him, "Can you let us through to-night?" he replied, "I can let you through this lock, but you will have trouble getting through the lower locks to-night. You'd best wait over until morning."

He seemed a kind, pleasant man, and the boys asked,—

"Can we camp down on your grass for the night?"

"Why, no," he replied. The boys' faces fell, but shortened again quickly when he added, "I can't hear of your lying outdoors. The nights are getting damp and coolish now. You'd better come right into our house. My wife will keep you over night, I know."

They received a most cordial welcome from Mrs. Ames, the lock-keeper's wife, who showed them to a little room, plain indeed, but sweet with perfect neatness, and pretty with a simple good taste. The boys made such toilet as their limited wardrobes afforded, and felt after it,

as Herbert said, "almost like civilized human beings again."

They were treated by Mr. and Mrs. Ames, as their friends and guests, and all the friendliness of the boys' warm hearts came out in the sunshine of this kindness. The evening passed away in pleasant chat. The boys discovered they had a common friend in a favorite teacher of their younger days, who proved to be a niece of Mr. Ames. They retired early, and slept the sleep of the tired, after their troubled rest of the previous night and very early rising that morning. As they estimated, they had come fourteen miles that day, and were now fifty-six miles from their starting-point.



CHAPTER XI.

ON THE CONCORD.

THE next day dawned fair and bright. The boys arose much refreshed, open to all the inspiration of the lovely summer morning. Their kind hosts declined pay for their hospitality, and sped them on their way with many cordial good wishes.

The boys enjoyed the exciting experience of going through the lock. Then they paddled swiftly down the canal, under bridge after bridge, the novel spectacle of a canoe attracting much attention, so that they received a continued ovation of waving handkerchiefs from innumerable factory-girls as they sped by.

The lock-keepers farther down the canal declined to put their locks in order for so small a craft as the "Susan," but were all obliging enough to help the boys with the portage. And

about noon they found themselves floating on the waters of their third river, — the Concord.

There could hardly have been a greater contrast than the Concord offered to the other streams on which they had voyaged, — the sparkling, rushing, tumultuous Piscataquog, and the broad, dignified, commercially important Merrimac.

The Indians, who certainly showed fully as good taste in naming rivers and localities as their pale-faced supplacers, called the Concord the “Musketaquid,” which, being interpreted, means the “Meadow, or Grass-ground” river. It steals along with countless windings through swamp and meadow, whose rich soil blackens its waters, its current so imperceptible that Thoreau mentions a Concord legend to the effect that the only bridge ever carried away on its main branch “was driven up-stream by the wind!” And Hawthorne says he actually lived three weeks on its margin before he was sure which way its current flowed.

The boys had hard work getting up over two or three dams, which consumed much time, strength, and patience. But these obstacles

surmounted, they found the Concord an ideal stream to ascend. Its sluggish current offered no resistance to their upward progress. There were no rocks, no rapids. Its dark, still waters reflected like a rain-mirror the blue sky, the white clouds drifting across it, the overhanging willows and alders festooned with wild grape-vines, nodding bulrush, waving flag-leaf, and crimson cardinal-flower.

Through this pleasing landscape the "Black-eyed Susan" "floated double, swan and shadow," seeming suspended by some magic art between two worlds. Looking over the canoe's side, the boys' own jolly faces peered up at them from the depths below, as if some rollicking mermen mocked them by assuming their image.

"The Concord is called a capital stream for fishing," said Herbert. "I only wish the best half of my fish-pole had n't gone over that dam. Ha! did you see that big pickerel, Gif? He's a magnificent old fellow! There! he's just going under those lily-pads."

"Hist! That's a pike! Look, — nose against the river!
Gaunt as a wolf, — the sly old privateer!"

quoted Gifford.

"Enter a gudgeon. Snap! a gulp, a shiver.
Exit the gudgeon. Let us anchor here,"

and get some of these glorious blossoms for Aunt Senie," said Herbert, leaping ashore.

He strolled along, gathering here and there a handful of cardinal-flowers, white arrow-heads, a coarse but tall and showy wild coreopsis, and many other varieties of blossoms. When back in the canoe again, he selected the choicest specimens of each, and pressed them by the simple process of placing them in his journal and then sitting on the book. He and Gifford also stuck jaunty knots of the gay flowers in their hatbands, after the fashion so dear to the heart of Swiss and Italian drivers and postilions.

And so they voyaged merrily up the enchanted stream, feeling always the fascination of exploring an unknown region, never knowing what might be coming around the next bend of the river. From shady coves, wild ducks, startled at their silent approach, darted swiftly away to thicker coverts, and frightened king-fisher and heron flew from overhanging branches with shrill notes of alarm at this invasion. Toward noon, Gifford, who was exploring along

the shore, while Herbert paddled slowly on, announced:—

“Bert, the huckleberries are ripe, and these grassy hillocks over here are covered with bushes.”

Herbert leaped ashore, and before long they had a hatful of the black, shining berries. Then they paddled more briskly, on the lookout for some farm-house where they might dine. But no house appeared; on each side of the river were only wide stretches of swampy meadows or pine woods. Upon the crackers, which they always kept on board for emergencies, they were now fain to dine, only too thankful for the huckleberries. They filled their drinking-cups from a clear little rill which came purling into the Concord, its waters deriving, the boys fancied, a certain agreeable aromatic flavor from the hemlock roots among and around which it wound.

“Keep up good heart, Bert,” said Gifford, as he saw Herbert washing down the dry cracker with big draughts of water, his face wearing an expression of disgust. “We shall reach Billerica to-day, I’m sure; and then for a square meal.”

"The quicker we strike it the better," said Herbert. "A man can sustain life for a while on crackers, but I don't want to carry the experiment too far. Let's aboard and off, as fast as we can. Those clouds yonder look squally."

The boys now stopped no more in dallyings by the way, but paddled rapidly on up-stream. The gathering clouds, however, outsped them, and soon the placid waters of the Concord were dimpled by the lively pattering of innumerable raindrops. The boys protected their luggage with the rubber blanket, and sped on in the driving rain, sustained by the hope of soon coming to friendly shelter and a good supper, of which they sorely felt the need.

They had met with so much kindly hospitality along their route, and were conscious themselves of deserving so well, and feeling so friendly to the world generally, that they had no expectation of meeting rebuffs. But they had yet to learn that there are "people and people" in the world.

At North Billerica they encountered a dam. In the pouring rain they tugged and lifted the "Susan" over a banking into the canal, and



paddled around into the river again. And now, at last, they saw with joy a few houses ahead. Here was the coveted stopping-place for the night.

Securing the canoe in a cove thickly sheltered with bushes, they shouldered their luggage, and confidently approached the nearest house. To tell the truth, the boys hardly realized the shabbiness of their array, which had been gradually increasing under the vicissitudes of the trip. Their knickerbockers had long since given out, and they now wore the old patched trousers provided as reserves by their mothers' foresight. Gifford had been so unfortunate as to slit one leg of his trousers up half-way to his knee. This, and the fact of his wearing one shoe and one slipper, added to the general impression his appearance would naturally make on a superficial observer, who should judge solely by the outer man. Sunburnt and tanned, their rough clothes worn and faded, their shapeless hats still bedizened with the knots of faded flowers, perhaps it is no wonder that the woman who opened the door and beheld these two forms with their packs on their backs, dripping before her in the

rain, started in evident dismay, and in response to the formula recited glibly by Gifford, answered emphatically,—

“No, I can’t keep you. I don’t take in no strangers. You can get in over there, I guess,” she added, pointing to a small shanty across the road.

She slammed the door in their faces, without giving them time for further inquiries, and was heard vigorously to lock it.

“She don’t seem impressed with our beauty,” said Herbert, grimly, not relishing this rebuff, but somewhat sustained by his sense of fun, and the feeling of their being, in a way, princes in disguise, meeting the usual fate of such princes in all well-regulated fairy-tales.

“Let’s look up this place she recommends,” said Gifford.

But the house across the road proved to be occupied by negroes, of apparently a low-down sort. One more house remained to be tried. Here they found an old couple living, who regarded them with even greater suspicion than their first friend. It was now Herbert’s turn to repeat the formula.



"No," said the old lady, promptly, "you can't stay here. We don't know who you be. There's been lots of tramps around here lately. Father and I are old folks, and we've got to look out for ourselves. You can't stop here."

"May we sleep in your barn, then?" asked Gifford.

"No, sir!" said the old gentleman, emphatically. "There was a barn burned in town less than a week ago. Folks thought likely some tramps went in there to sleep and set it on fire with their dirty pipes. No, sir! I won't have no tramps in my barn if I know it."

And the old gentleman closed his door and retired within his fortress.

The boys turned slowly away in the pouring rain and walked back for a second look at the negro hut. If only it had not rained, they would cheerfully have camped beside the Concord, and "taken dints from naebody." It is not too much to say that Herbert was homesick; while some thoughts of how his mother would feel if she could see her boy just then, tired, hungry, wet, refused a night's shelter, crossed Gifford's mind.

Not even the direst necessity could make the negro hut tolerable. Gifford's spirit rose to the occasion.

"I tell you what it is, Bert," he said, "the only thing we can do is to go back to those old people and *make* them take us in. We must just talk them right into it. Keep up a brisk talk. Don't give them a chance to remonstrate. If I stop, you strike right in."

"I pity them!" said Herbert. "If they knew you as well as I do, they would yield at once, and save further trouble. Here goes, then, for a combined attack on the enemy's fortress."

They returned to the house, where the old people were felicitating themselves on having so nicely "got rid of them two tramps."

The boys had resolved, if the door were opened but an inch, to wedge themselves in through that inch, and, once in, they were there to stay.

In response to their knock, the old gentleman cautiously opened the door and peered out. The boys pressed themselves gently but firmly through the crack thus offered, gradually insinuating themselves into the room.

Gifford, in his best society manner, which consorted so oddly with his looks that Herbert had difficulty in suppressing his inclination to laugh, said: —

“ Madam, we are not tramps, as you evidently think. We are two Boston boys on a canoe trip. We’ve been out some time, and of course, under the circumstances, we can’t help looking rather seedy ; but I assure you, we are really most respectable persons. Why, my friend here is an Osborne, — an Osborne of Roxbury ! Surely you must have heard of the Osbornes of Roxbury ? ”

Herbert, trying to assume an air appropriate to his noble lineage, and not to giggle, burst in before the old couple had time to draw breath, —

“ And this young man is a King. King is a good old Boston name. You must know of the Kings.”

The old lady had heard of the Kings, and was considerably impressed ; but before she could say anything, a happy thought struck Gifford.

“ Herbert,” he said, “ where is that notice from the Manchester ‘ Mirror ’ ? ”

Herbert handed a crumpled piece of paper to the old gentleman, who slowly drew out and put on his "specs," and began to read this indorsement with a solemnity befitting the importance of the occasion, while the boys kept up a rattling conversation with, or rather *at*, his wife.

"Well," said the old gentleman, somewhat convinced because he had "seen it in print," slowly removing his glasses, folding and returning the paper, "if I knew you were the fellers — "

"Why, of course we are," said Gifford. "I can take you right down to the river and show you the very canoe."

"Father," said the old lady, "the boys look to me like good boys. I guess you'd better let 'em sleep in the barn to-night. I don't believe they'll do any mischief. We should feel pretty bad to have our John turned out of doors such a night as this."

The boys felt like embracing the dear old lady on the spot, but restrained, and, escorted rather reluctantly by her husband, went out to the barn. His suspicions were evidently not

wholly laid, and he cheered the boys' spirits by such dark hints as these, casually thrown out :

" I've got a revolver and a gun, and I ain't afraid to use 'em, either. Always keep 'em loaded. I'd just as soon shoot a tramp as not, if he came hanging round my house at night;" and so on.

He returned to the house, and the boys made a weary but rather ineffectual attempt to satisfy their hungry cravings with crackers.

" Do you know, Gif," said Herbert, as the wind howled around the barn, and the rain pelted against it, " I had all I could do to keep from laughing when you brought out our noble lineage! It reminded me of :—

' Saint Patrick was a gentleman,
Who came of decent people ;
He built a church in Dublin town,
And on it put a steeple.
His father was a Gallagher ;
His mother was a Brady ;
His aunt was an O'Shaughnessy,
His uncle an O'Grady.' "

Here he was interrupted by the reappearance of the old gentleman, bearing a large, old-fashioned mug full of milk, and some cakes.

"Here's a mug of milk, and a cake apiece," he said shortly, and departed.

The boys felt that the old lady's heart was softening toward them. The milk and cakes were a most welcome addition to their meagre supper. In somewhat better cheer, they climbed the hay-mow, rolled up in their blankets, and were soon sound asleep, lulled rather than disturbed by the pounding of the rain on the roof close over their heads. If now and then a drop spattered through the cracks and fell on their faces, they knew it not.

They had made only five miles that day, having now paddled sixty-one miles, as nearly as they could judge, from Frantestown.

CHAPTER XII.

CLASSIC GROUND.

"COMETH sunshine after rain," had always been the boys' experience; so they were not surprised the next morning at the radiant sunlight which greeted their waking eyes, streaming in long, dusty rays through every crack and knot-hole of the old barn. They clambered down from their lofty bed, to find the old gentleman on the lookout for them.

He had been so relieved, on awaking, to find all well, his barn unburned, his house unrobbed, his throat whole and sound, that he now felt quite cordial toward his unwelcome guests, while his wife was free to tell him: —

"I told you so; I knew them was good boys. They've got real good, honest faces."

"Come into the house," he said. "My wife wants to give you some breakfast before you set out."

The boys could not afford to be proud, and reject this late-coming kindness with proper scorn. On the contrary, they accepted the invitation only too gladly, and enjoyed the baked potatoes, codfish cream, and hot coffee with such vigorous appetites as only a long course of canoeing and crackers can induce.

The old gentleman, a little ashamed of his groundless suspicions perhaps, stoutly refused to receive any pay for his hospitality; and the boys departed, feeling more lenient toward North Billerica than they would have thought possible the previous evening. They found the canoe safe, and set off for Concord in high spirits.

After planning their canoe trip, the boys had tried hard to read Thoreau's "A Week on the Concord and Merrimac Rivers," but had found the philosophy interwoven with the book's charming descriptions too deep and too steep for them to grapple with. Still, they were both well aware that they were entering classic territory, and that of no river in the country has so much been sung and written as of the Concord. As Gifford phrased it:—



"There's been a deal of high thinking done on and about the Concord. No wonder it steals along so darkly and solemnly, unlike other streams, as if it realized itself to be as famous, in its way, as the Arno or the Tiber."

"Yes," said Herbert; "it's a sort of liberal education to paddle up it. We shall imbibe wisdom from the very air here, I suppose. Even Aunt Senie ought to treat me with a decent degree of respect after this."

And so, refreshed by their night's sleep and the good breakfast, animated by the fair morning, and full of anticipations of the day's experiences, the boys paddled gayly on, their progress somewhat impeded, however, by a strong head-wind. At noon they lunched on a beautiful island, densely wooded, its trees festooned with wild grape-vines.

Late in the afternoon, when the tree-shadows lay long across the green meadows, and a subtle coolness and dampness began to rise from field and river, they descried, not without a thrill of excitement, the spires of Concord village rising from thick clusters of elms and maples, far off to the southwest.

"We should have time to paddle on an hour or two longer to-night," said Gifford, "if we chose."

"Oh, it would never do to pass Concord!" said Herbert. "I could never look Aunt Asenath or Marion in the face again if I were capable of such a thing! Besides, I really want to look about the famous old place myself."

"So do I, of course," said Gifford.

Soon the winding river brought them into the famous port of Concord. Securing the canoe near the statue of the Minute-Man, and depositing their effects in a small house near by, where they also engaged supper, they went first to the post-office, and then rambled about the town, gazing with boyish reverence and enthusiasm on the roofs that had sheltered the seers, the poets, the helpers, the exponents of "plain living and high thinking."

Passing the Alcott homestead, they half expected to meet some of the "Little Women" or "Jo's Boys." They entered Sleepy Hollow Cemetery as the sun was setting. The hour, the place, and its associations all disposed them to reverent silence as they walked in the waning



light under the solemn arches of the trees, and stood beside the graves of Emerson, Thoreau, Hawthorne, the Alcotts, while the evening wind sighed through the great pines as if lamenting the vanished ones.

But as young natures react quickly, by the time they had returned to the canoe and eaten supper, all melancholy impressions were forgotten, and they discussed their plans for the night in their usual lively mood.

The evening was clear and still, every gleaming star overhead mirrored in the dark waters of the Concord.

"I'm in favor of camping out right where we are," said Herbert.

"It's going to be pretty cool to-night," said Gifford.

"Oh, we shall be warm enough under our blankets!" urged Herbert. "And it will be something to tell of,—that we camped on the old Concord battle-ground."

"Yes, and worth remembering too. We can tell it to our grandchildren," said Gifford.
"Camp it is, then."

They spread their rubber blanket on the

ground, smooth and slippery with pine needles, under some grand old pines near the Minute-Man, rolled themselves up in their woollen blankets, and composed themselves to sleep.

It being a public place, they half expected they should be disturbed before morning. But Concord seemed to be as quiet a place as its name implies. Their only disturbance was from a pair of lovers, who, rambling along, oblivious of the outside world, stumbled over their prostrate forms. It is safe to say they were more startled than the boys.

As they hurried away, Herbert nudged Gifford, murmuring,—

“ He said soft, soft things to her,
Down by the salt, salt sea.”

“ Do hush, Bert! ” growled Gifford. “ Shut up, and let’s go to sleep, if we can. I’m tired.”

“ I’m tired enough,” said Herbert; “ but I believe I never felt so wide awake in my life.”

In fact, fatigue with him took the form of intense nervous excitement, stimulated by all the ideas and suggestions of the day, and their surroundings.

In the starlight, the dark form of the Minute-Man loomed dimly up, keeping silent watch and ward over the quiet spot, a hundred years ago and more the scene of such a bloody conflict. Herbert's excited imagination pictured it all,— resounding musketry, surging passions, the bitter struggle, wounds, groans, death. The wind, which had blown so strongly all day, now surged and moaned mournfully through the pines overhead.

Herbert may not have read of the vision Hosea Biglow describes as seen here one night by Concord Bridge:—

“ Las' night
The British sogers killed in our gret fight
(Nigh fifty year they hed n't stirred nor spoke)
Made sech a coil you 'd thought a dam hed broke :
Why, one he up an' beat a revellee
With his own crossbones on a holler tree,
Till all the graveyards swarmed out like a hive
With faces I hain't seen sence Seventy-five.”

But the appearance of dim ghostly figures in revolutionary uniform gliding out from behind the black tree-trunks would hardly have surprised him. He rolled and tossed, and thought of everything under the sun. Finally he broke out,—

"Say, Gif, how do those verses go that you used to speak at school? The—the—ah yes, I have it:—

'Here once the embattled farmers stood,
And fired the shot heard round the world.'

Here, right here, mind you, Gif!"

"'Sh!" muttered Gifford, almost asleep.

"Oh, you want the second verse too, do you?", said Herbert, spouting on:—

"'The foe long since in silence slept;
Alike the conqueror silent sleeps;
And Time the ruined bridge has swept—'"

"This is intolerable!" cried Gifford, rolling over impatiently.

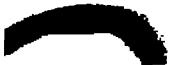
"Intolerable! Why, it's always been considered very fine," retorted Herbert. "I'm surprised you don't admire it."

Here the strange, weird cry of an owl resounded through the silence of the night.

"Ha!" cried Herbert; "an owl.

'Alone, and warming his five wits,
The white owl in the belfry sits.'"

His active brain was at its keenest, and he felt as if he could go on talking all night, if only Gifford would not be so perversely stupid.



Gifford, however, was now thoroughly aroused.

"Herbert!" he exclaimed, in his most determined tones; "there'll be another Concord fight on this old battle-ground in about five minutes, if you don't close that mouth of yours and let me sleep. The shot may not be 'heard round the world,' but there'll be a big splash in the 'dark stream' that will wake up all the muskrats and mud-turtles. I'll cool off your enthusiasm, if you don't quit!"

"Of course there would be owls in Concord," continued Herbert placidly, unmindful of this gentle hint,—"Minerva's bird; I presume the Concord girls keep them in cages, instead of parrots. I know a—"

"I mean what I say!" cried the exasperated Gifford, rising up grimly in the darkness, and laying strong hold of Herbert.

"Quits! quits!" cried Herbert, aware that Gifford was more than a match for him. "I'll hush my burning brain, and bid its ravings cease!"

"You'd best, or I'll soon cool it for you in the river, I promise you!" said Gifford emphatically, as he rolled over, and composed himself again to sleep.

"Concord air's too much for me," Herbert could not resist muttering.

But in spite of it, the soughing of the pines finally lulled him also to sleep; and if any ghosts walked on Concord battle-ground that night, they were unseen by him.

Their day's record was ten miles,—making seventy-one miles in all.

CHAPTER XIII.

UP THE SUDBURY.

THE boys slept poorly, half conscious all night that it was cold, and that their blankets were too thin. They were glad when the sonorous crowing of Concord cocks all around, far and near, announced the gray dawn of another day. They were up when the first red rays of the rising sun struck the Minute-Man, and ready for breakfast before it was ready for them.

They spent the time, while waiting for breakfast, in examining Daniel French's spirited statue, which was erected April 19, 1875, on the one hundredth anniversary of the battle. An old man who was passing, seeing that they were strangers, stopped to talk awhile, and gave them some interesting details of the erection of the statue.

One Ebenezer Hubbard, a Concord farmer, whose character must have had a vein of rugged originality and independence worthy the townsman of Emerson and Thoreau, inherited the land in the village whereon the British troops had committed depredations. He never failed to hoist there the stars and stripes every 19th of April and 4th of July. He was deeply grieved that the monument erected by the town in 1836 should mark the position occupied by the enemy, instead of the defenders in the fight; and when he died he left by will a sum of money to the town to erect a monument on the very spot where the minute-men and militia had stood, and also to maintain a bridge forever on the site of the old bridge around which the fight had raged. So to Ebenezer Hubbard's sturdy patriotism Concord owes this fine memorial, the Minute-Man.

After breakfast, the boys turned their backs on their historic camping-ground and plied their paddles up the Concord. Although the sun was bright and warm, there was an undertone of coolness in the air that hinted of the approaching autumn; so did the spires of golden-rod

nodding thickly along the grassy uplands, and the vivid red and yellow of too precocious bushes here and there in the swamps.

"Just the day for canoeing," said Gifford.

"Yes," said Herbert; "I'm right on deck for business this morning, and that paddle of yours will have to fly if it keeps pace with mine."

"If the stern of this canoe doesn't keep up with the bow, you let me know it," said Gifford.

The boys paddled up-stream, past the mouth of the Assabet, and came into the upper part of the river, known as the Sudbury. The Sudbury's course lies through wide, low meadows. Often the rank-growing grass along the shores shut out all view beyond from the boys, sitting low in their canoe, and gave them an agreeable sense of remoteness from civilization.

"We might be two of the original Indians paddling up this stream in our birch-bark canoe," remarked Herbert.

"You certainly look like an original Indian," said Gifford, looking laughingly at Herbert's well-tanned face.

The water in the Sudbury was low, so low that often it was difficult getting through the

tangle of long, grassy weeds that covered the bottom, and twined their slimy arms around the "Susan's" prow. Sometimes, indeed, the river oozed away over the flats and lost itself among the reeds and cut-grass. It was almost impossible to keep the main channel, and once the boys actually lost their way, and brought up standing in a sedgy cove. They agreed this was the most peculiar stream of all upon which they had voyaged.

"Longfellow's 'Wayside Inn' was in Sudbury," remarked Gifford; "so mother said, when we were planning our route."

"There does n't seem to be any wayside or waterside inn along this brooklet, streamlet, rivulet, creek-u-let, or whatever-you-call-et," said Herbert. "I'm not particular; I'd just as soon stop at Longfellow's Inn as any other, if it would only put in an appearance."

No inn did they come to, however, and they were only too glad to dine at a farm-house on royal bowls of bread and milk, which keen hunger made delicious.

In the afternoon, having reached what they judged to be the nearest point to Wayland

village, they secured the canoe, and walked up to the post-office. Having found no letters at Concord, they felt quite sure of some here.

Alas, not a letter was there for them! This was a great disappointment. Both boys felt a little depressed. The trip had lost the charm of novelty, their funds were running low, and they began to find it difficult to rise above appearances, and not feel like the tramps they looked. Home began to seem very attractive. Then, too, this was Saturday,—Saturday afternoon,—and they had no idea where they should spend either the night or the coming Sunday.

As they slowly returned to the canoe in solemn silence, Gifford divined Herbert's probable musings, not only by the unusual length and sobriety of that jolly young gentleman's visage, and the ominous silence of his lively tongue, but also by his own feelings, and realized that it behooved him, as the older, to cheer his comrade.

"No news is always good news, you know, Bert. Probably they have underrated our progress, and did not expect us to reach Wayland so soon."

"I think it more likely," growled Herbert, "that, though 'lost to sight,' we're *not* 'to memory dear.' They're simply glad to be rid of us, and don't care what becomes of us."

"Nonsense! You know better than that, Bert."

"Bessie is probably too much absorbed in flirting with that fascinating Freshman she wrote about, to remember to write," said Herbert. "Not that I care whether she writes to me or not. It's a pleasant outlook for Sunday, isn't it?"

"Oh, we shall come out all right! Something will turn up in our favor yet, Mr. Micawber. We'll paddle on up-stream till dark, or until we strike a good stopping-place. We shall get along somehow, see if we don't. We always have, you know."

"Yes, but this 'getting along somehow' is growing rather monotonous. However, there's nothing to be done, I suppose, but to go on, and trust to luck."

They paddled on, without, however, coming to any place of shelter for the night. The sun set, the evening star shone out, the twittering birds

flew homeward to their nests, the lonely evening wind rustled through the long grass, and still no lodging-place. Through the darkness they could dimly perceive that the right bank of the stream rose up quite high above their heads,—higher than at any point they had passed that day.

"Bert," said Gifford, "this looks like a high and dry spot. We may as well camp here overnight, and try for better luck to-morrow by daylight. It's too late to go any farther."

"This *is* 'getting along somehow,'" was Herbert's only reply, as he stepped out of the canoe, which they contrived to draw far enough up on the land to insure its safety for the night. They took the paddles with them, and having, after much fumbling about, managed to find the bag of crackers, they forced down enough to partially satisfy the cravings of hunger, and then rolled up in their blankets for the night.

"The grass seems remarkably nice and long here," remarked Gifford. "It makes a soft bed."

"Glad you see it in that light! Well, let us be thankful for any 'marcies,'" said Herbert.

They had come nine miles that day,—eighty in all.

Sunday morning dawned bright, still, and peaceful, a typical New England Sunday, especially in the remote field where the boys had passed the night. They had but half slept all night, it being too cold to allow them to forget the hardness of the ground, and consequently they had rolled and tumbled about more restlessly than usual. To their dismay, they found on rising that they had made their bed among some wheat, and in their uneasy tossings had ruined a large patch of it.

"This is a shame!" said Gifford. "The owner will be furious when he sees it."

"Let's pay him for the damage," said Herbert.

"How can we? We don't know who he is."

"Why, on the principle of the 'ginger jar.' I'll soon show you."

Herbert found a large flat stone, which he placed conspicuously in the centre of the crushed patch. On the stone he laid a quarter of a dollar. Then, tearing a leaf from the "log," he scribbled on it these lines:—

"We lay this quarter at your feet,
Kind sir, for sleeping on your wheat."



Placing the paper on the stone, under the quarter, Herbert contemplated the arrangement with much satisfaction.

"There!" he said. "The owner will naturally walk out Sunday to gloat over his wheat-field, and if he is half a man, that ought to satisfy him."

"I should say so!" exclaimed Gifford. "A quarter of a dollar, and an original poem thrown in! Our consciences can certainly rest easy now."

The boys now embarked, and paddled on, keeping a keen lookout for some place where they could rest over Sunday. At last they came to a pleasant-looking farm-house, not far from the river-bank. Fastening the "Susan," — as they hoped until Monday morning, — they approached this house. They were by this time so weary of their formula that they usually flipped up a penny to see which should repeat it. This time the lot fell to Gifford. He addressed himself to a small boy hanging on the front gate, saying,—

"We are canoeists. We are paddling up the river, stopping at farm-houses. We can pay

our way. We would like to stay here over Sunday."

"I dunno whether you can stay here or not," replied the boy, doubtfully. "You'll have to ask father. Here he comes, now."

The father, seeing his boy talking with such dubious-looking strangers, came out to see what was wanted. He was a tall, good-looking Irishman. He did not seem favorably impressed with his would-be guests, and listened to their moving tale unmoved, saying frankly: —

"It's a foine story ye tell, but a moighty improbable one, I'm thinking. I never happened to see any Boston young gintlemen coming around Sundays looking like this. I can't harbor ye. I heard only yesterday evenin' that some fellows had escaped from the Reform School over here in Framingham, and ye look moightly to me like ye moight be two of 'em. Perhaps ye came honestly by that boat, but I doubt it. Go into the house, Tim," he said sharply to the boy, as if fearing he might be contaminated by such associates.

This was disgusting enough. But the case

was desperate. They must somehow convince him of their respectability. A bright idea struck Herbert. Thrusting his hand in his pocket, he drew out a tooth-brush.

"See here," he said. "Did you ever know tramps to carry tooth-brushes?"

This was too much for the Irishman's native sense of humor. He laughed, and said,—

"Come along in wid ye, and git some breakfast. I 'll give ye a thrial, anyway."

The boys cheerfully followed him into the large kitchen, where an innumerable family of young folks were about sitting down to breakfast.

Mr. Quin carried on a large dairy, sending his milk to Boston. He belonged to the best class of Irish,—thrifty, industrious, shrewd, sensible, and witty. When, later in the morning, he happened to see a notice in his Lowell paper that the boys had passed there a day or two earlier, a notice fully corroborating their story, he was only too happy to lay aside his last lingering doubt, and treat them with the hearty kindness natural to him.

The boys enjoyed themselves very much

with the Quins, big and little, and indeed struck up a hearty friendship which resulted in more than one visit there afterward, on hunting and fishing excursions. They loafed and rested all day, thoroughly enjoying their well-earned repose.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE PAPER-MILL.

EARLY Monday morning young Jim Quin had his father's wagon at the door, ready to take canoe and canoeists across the interval lying between the Sudbury and Lake Cochituate.

A row of Quins of assorted sizes stood around the front gate to see them off, and amid a rattling fire of, "Good-by! Good-by! Luck go wid ye! Come again!" the boys drove off, waving their hats in final farewell as they disappeared around a bend in the road.

The morning was gray, promising rain. The boys were in good spirits, however, fresh and strong after their Sunday's rest, happy because their trip was so near completion, because it was morning and they were off again, but chiefly because they were young and could n't help it.

They much enjoyed letting themselves out at full speed on the lake's broad expanse, after their late struggle with the weed-entangled Sudbury, and dashed along with vigorous sweeps of their paddles through the series of lakes connected by sluice-ways.

Presently the lake's smooth surface began to dimple with pattering raindrops from the dark clouds overhead. This was the first of a series of driving showers, following one another all day, with brief intervals of watery sunshine, which, instead of encouraging him, reminded Gifford of Bridget's favorite weather prediction,

“Open and shet,
A sign of more wet.”

The boys, however, having by this time a cheerful confidence that they were neither sugar nor salt, paddled swiftly on, rather enjoying their own indifference to the weather's freaks.

At South Natick they landed, and sought an express-wagon to carry the “Black-eyed-Susan” over another intervalle into the Charles River.

They soon learned that one Hiram Bemus was the man for this business. Hiram was

readily found. He proved to be a tall, lean man, evidently a Yankee of the Yankees, closeness, caution, and calculation written all over his weather-beaten countenance.

After hearing their request, he replied slowly,—

“Waal, I dunno ‘bout it. I ain’t over busy jest now, and I can haul you two fellers and your boat over to the Charles easy enough in my big wagon. I’ll do it for—lemme see,—waal, I’ll do it for a dollar and a half. Reckon that goes a *leetle* beyond your pile, eh?” he added, scanning their worn clothes with a disparaging look.

“Can you change a five, Mr. Bemus?” asked Gifford, producing a five-dollar bill in a nonchalant manner intended to impress Mr. Bemus. But Mr. Bemus was impressed in the wrong way. He eyed both the bill and Gifford with evident suspicion.

“No-o,” he said slowly, shaking his head. “I can’t change no bills. I guess likely you can git that bill changed somewhere round here.”

He stood with his hands in his pockets and

an air of indifference, while Gifford went about to several stores near by, trying to change the bill. To his disgust, his shabby clothes quite outweighed his honest face and gentlemanly bearing, and the cautious shopkeepers failed to see how an apparent tramp could have honestly come by a five-dollar bill.

We may please ourselves by fancying that,—

“Worth makes the man, the want of it the fellow,
And all the rest’s but leather and prunella;”

but as the world is now constituted, “leather and prunella” play an important part. “Dress do make a difference, David;” and so Gifford found it.

At last an apparently unscrupulous saloon-keeper changed the bill, the suspicious Hiram was paid in advance, and the boys embarked on another stream of many associations, the Charles, which winds gently down through green meadow-lands by Mt. Auburn, through Cambridge, past the homes of Lowell and Longfellow, to the sea.

“We’re on classic waters again,” said Gifford, as they paddled off down the Charles.

"I know it," said Herbert. "You can't throw a stone in this region without danger of hitting a poet,—at any rate, a magazine contributor."

"I only hope the literary atmosphere won't go to your brain again," said Gifford. "I have n't forgotten our night in Concord."

"I'll put a cold-water bandage around my head if I feel any symptoms," said Herbert. "That is one of Aunt Asenath's most approved remedies for anything, from a cold in the head to brain fever."

This precaution proved quite unnecessary, as their view of the landscape along the Charles was soon shut off by the pouring rain, which now set steadily in. Ere long Herbert's hat was sufficiently soaked to answer every purpose of a wet bandage. The shores were dimly seen through gray sheets of driving rain. When, late in the afternoon, they reached the small group of houses clustered around a paper-mill, known as Charles River Village, they were not slow in deciding that it was best to stop here for the night.

They entered the paper-mill, thinking they might here find shelter from the storm, and

were thus hospitably welcomed by two men at work there: —

“Come along in, and shet the door after you, can’t you? Don’t you see the rain’s a drivin’ in?”

The boys found the glow of the furnace fires most agreeable to their wet, chilled bodies. As they stood drying their dripping clothes, Gifford inquired if they might spend the night in the mill.

“Oh, yes,” said the man who seemed at the head of affairs. “We keep open all night, and men on the road often stop here overnight.”

Evidently he, like every one else, took them for tramps. They bought supper at a house near by. Later in the evening they seemed to rise in the estimation of their host, and he appeared to find something in them superior to the ordinary run of tramps, for he invited them into an adjoining room, saying, —

“Come in here. I guess I can get you a bed on the rags.”

But a sharp-eyed, sharp-featured woman, who seemed the presiding genius of this room, turned quickly at the sound of their footsteps, and with

an angry frown at the boys, exclaimed in shrill tones : —

“ Now, Bill Swan, you kin jest take your tramps right out o’ here. I won’t have ‘em here spoilin’ my rags with their dirty clothes, and like’s not settin’ the mill on fire. I won’t have ‘em here, and that’s the end on ‘t.”

Evidently woman’s rights prevailed in that paper-mill. Bill meekly and hastily retreated, followed by the boys. Bill showed them a pile of paper clippings in one corner where they could sleep. As they knew nothing of the mill-hands, nor in what sort of company they were about to sleep, before they camped on the paper clippings for the night the boys judged it prudent to hide their money. So, slipping outdoors, they stealthily buried it under the edge of a convenient brick-pile, where it would keep dry, and where they could easily find it again the next morning.

“ It would n’t make a man a millionaire if he should find that purse,” said Herbert.

“ No,” said Gifford, “ but it would be mighty inconvenient for us, all the same.”

On the whole, Charles River Village seemed

to them rather a cheerless place, as they lay down upon the paper clippings.

"What's the use of wrestling with fate!" exclaimed Herbert. "We might as well give in and *be* tramps, and done with it. I feel capable of robbing a hen-roost this minute."

"This is n't over jolly," said Gifford, "but it might be worse. Fancy having to camp outdoors such a night as this. We ought to be thankful for such a warm, cosey place to sleep, and a roof over our head."

"I am thankful," said Herbert. "Did n't I tell you I had given up, and was going to let fate trample on me all it pleases, without a struggle? Another thing I'm thankful for, though, is that we're nine miles nearer home to-night."

"Well," said Gifford, "let's go to sleep if we can, and be ready for a good pull to-morrow."

The boys soon fell asleep, in spite of the lack of luxury in their accommodations, but about one o'clock were wakened by loud, angry voices.

The man in charge of the mill for the night was trying to order off the premises a drunken

fellow, who was determined to stay. It seemed he had been turned out of some place where he had become involved in a drunken quarrel. The dispute ran high for some time. Finally the mill-hand said :—

“ It’s no use wasting words on you. You’re drunk as a fool. Lie down there, and sleep it off if you can, and don’t let me hear anything more from you to-night.”

The drunken man staggered over to the pile of paper clippings, and lay down beside the boys. Herbert nudged Gifford, and whispered, “ ‘ Misery makes strange bedfellows.’ ” At first, the drunken man was disposed to be quarrelsome; but being let strictly alone, soon he became tenderly affectionate, being much drawn to the boys as fellow-tramps and brothers.

“ You’re on the road, and I’m on the road,” he mauldered, sitting up and swaying about. “ Shake hands.”

This ceremony the boys had to undergo, rather than quarrel with him.

“ I’m a hard lad — drunk most of the time. But I’ll never shee a friend want so long’s I have a cent in my pocket. I’ll shee ye off in

the morning, and ye sha' n't go without a bite to eat, and shomething to drink. No, sir! It sha' n't be said Pat Maloney ever shee a friend suffer."

He now, to the boys' relief, took a jovial turn, and indulged in snatches of song. Finally, at the urgent request of the mill-hand, he "shut his mouth," and, dropping over, literally fell into a drunken sleep, and lay snoring beside them.

But it was long ere the boys could go to sleep again. The novelty of their surroundings, the rude interior of the lonely mill, dimly lighted, the wind and storm howling mournfully around the building, shaking the doors violently, and dashing the rain in sheets against the windows that stared blackly out into the night,—all made them excited and wakeful; while the enforced companionship of the drunken man caused them to feel more like real tramps than any experience yet. No wonder they felt forlorn and lonely, and slept but brokenly.



CHAPTER XV.

A NAVAL ENGAGEMENT.

THEIR bed was so extremely uncomfortable, that although they had passed such a disturbed night, the boys woke quite early, feeling lame, tired, and dispirited, after the various experiences of the day and night just past. Their drunken friend still slept heavily, and they were careful not to arouse him.

To their disappointment, although it was not raining, neither was it clear. The weather was dark, cloudy, and threatening. The boys stood in the mill-door, anxiously scanning the gray sky.

"I don't think it's going to rain," said Herbert, whose anxiety to be getting on inclined him to the hopeful view. "It's going to lighten up and clear off, before long. 'Rain before

seven, clear before eleven,' you know. Don't you see that light spot now, down there in the south?"

"Yes," said Gifford; "but that's no place to look for fair weather. I am just as anxious to get on as you are, Bert; but it looks to me like a settled rainy day, and I think we'd best let well enough alone, and stay where we are till it clears. You know we agreed to lie by rainy days."

"Yes, I know," replied Herbert; "but I'm sure it's going to clear. Bet you the sun will be shining bright within half an hour. I'm for pushing ahead, without loss of time talking. Our friend and brother here will wake up, first we know, and then we shall have a jolly time. The quicker we're off, the better."

So the argument waged, back and forth, until it finally waxed warm; and when Gifford at last yielded to Herbert's determination to set out, it was with a very ill grace.

"It's the biggest foolishness I ever heard of," he grumbled. "We shall simply get wet through for nothing. It's sure to rain."

They paddled sulkily off down-stream, both



sadly out of humor with each other, the weather, and things in general. All too soon Gifford's dark predictions were fully realized. The rain came down, and soon both began to get pretty wet. Herbert now repented his persistency, and was not only ready but anxious to land. When, finally, they saw a small house a short distance below, on the right shore, he broke the rather moody silence in which they had hitherto paddled on, by saying, "Gif, you were right, after all. It is going to be a rainy day. Let's stop here, and put up at that house till the rain holds up. It looks just about good enough, and not too good, to take us in."

Gifford, who had felt vexed with Herbert before, was doubly annoyed at this proposition, but said nothing.

"If you don't want to stop," persisted Herbert, "you can land me here, and go on down-stream by yourself as far as you wish. I'll meet you to-morrow, after the rain."

Gifford looked contemptuous, but still deigned no answer, paddling steadily on down-stream. Herbert, meantime, struck out for the bank. Gradually it dawned upon him that he was

making no headway, that Gifford was working against him.

"Quit that, now, Gif!" he cried. "I'm going ashore, I tell you."

"All right. Go ahead!" said Gifford, laughing provokingly, and still paddling on down-stream.

Herbert continued to struggle for the shore, but in vain. The contest, begun half in fun, gradually waxed serious, as slowly but surely Gifford's obstinacy and Herbert's temper were thoroughly aroused.

And now began that battle of the Charles which will doubtless add to the historic fame of that already famous stream. Most naval engagements imply an encounter between two or more men-of-war. The distinguishing feature of the battle of the Charles is that it was fought in only one small craft, though two men of war were engaged in it.

The action, though brief, was brilliant. Both boys were now in a white heat.

"See here, Gif," said Herbert angrily, his black eyes flashing, "I won't be domineered over like this. I want you to understand I'm going ashore *now!*"

Gifford's eyes blazed. "I bet you won't go ashore!" he said grimly.

Herbert began fiercely paddling for the shore. Gifford paddled equally fiercely in the opposite direction. It was a clear case of "Greek meet Greek." Being about equally matched in strength, the inevitable result was that the "Black-eyed Susan" whirled round and round in a circle, like a crazy creature, while the current, meantime, was bearing her steadily downstream, past the house. Both boys were too angry to appreciate the absurdity of the situation. Round and round they spun in the rain, glaring at each other, each feeling that he would die before he would yield.

"Come, Gif, this is ridiculous!" cried Herbert, angrily. "Quit this fooling, and let me go ashore, I tell you!"

"Never!" said Gifford, setting his teeth. "You wanted to go on. Now you've got to!"

"We'll see about that!" said Herbert, paddling harder than ever for the shore.

Round and round whirled the "Susan" again, more violently, swayed roughly this way and that.

"I'll throw you overboard, if you don't quit!" cried Herbert, furious. "I'll throw your valise overboard!" at the same time making a dive for it.

At this, Gifford snatched his valise from Herbert, and gave a sudden tip to the canoe. Over she went, and down sank both combatants, with all colors flying!

Although the Charles was at this point not over their heads, for a moment both went under and disappeared, save that Gifford's outstretched arm still projected above the disturbed waters, holding aloft his valise, like Excalibar in the romance of King Arthur. The "Susan" floating bottom upward and the débris drifting and bobbing about on the current were the only remaining tokens of the late fierce conflict.

Then up from the water emerged two sleek, dripping heads, looking not unlike those of two huge water-rats. Gifford's first care was to swim ashore, and deposit his valise in safety on the bank. Then he plunged in again, to assist Herbert, who was having a lively scramble to save their effects. The current being quite swift at this point, the paddles had already

floated some distance down-stream, and some brisk swimming was necessary to secure them and the other floating wreckage. It involved some time and hard work. When, at last, all their goods and chattels were rescued, the boys carried them up on the bank, and Herbert spread his rubber blanket over them,—a somewhat needless precaution, it seemed, as certainly no amount of rain could make them wetter than they already were.

The waters of the Charles had decidedly cooled the boys' fury. Still, neither felt like talking, and the work of salvage had been carried on in silence.

Gifford's prompt action had kept his valise dry, while Herbert's things had all received a good ducking. Hence Gifford secretly felt that victory had, in a measure, as it were, perched on his banner; and when Herbert broke the silence, and made the first overture to reconciliation, by remarking sulkily, "You can put your valise under my rubber blanket, if you want to," he could afford to meet him half-way, and accept the peace-offering. They drew the "Susan" ashore, and turned her bot-

tom upward to drain, and then, still not wasting their breath by any unnecessary words, walked back in the rain to the house. The good woman who opened the door exclaimed,—

“Mercy on us, how wet you be! I knew it was raining pretty hard, but I didn’t suppose it poured like that!”

The boys did not consider it necessary to enter into explanations.

“Come in and dry yourselves by the kitchen stove,” continued she. “I’m bakin’, and I’ve got a first-rate fire. Never mind if you do drip. I’m going to mop up, by and by, anyway.”

As the boys stood dripping in the grateful heat of the kitchen stove, whence issued a delicious odor of baking bread, Gifford suddenly burst out laughing.

“What are you laughing at?” asked Herbert, resentfully.

“I happened to think how worried your Aunt Asenath was, for fear we might get our feet damp!”

Herbert’s face relaxed at this.

“Damp!” he said. “I wonder we are not

web-footed by this time, like two blessed old ducks!"

In short, the boys were gradually melting, as it were, and each began to feel secretly ashamed of his part in what they called "the row."

When they were nearly dry, the rain abated, and the gray sky lightened all over. Roosters crowed cheerfully far and near, the birds plucked up heart and began to sing again, and everything seemed to say, "Look out for fair weather about this time." The boys decided that it was now best to go on, and after purchasing a simple luncheon of their hostess, re-embarked in the damp "Susan."

There was still a barrier between them, a stiffness and sense of awkward consciousness left by their recent quarrel. But after they had paddled on awhile in silence, Herbert suddenly blurted out, "Gif, I beg your pardon! I ought to have been ashamed of myself to act so like a fool."

"I was quite as much to blame as you," said Gifford; "I ought to have had more sense."

"I don't know about that," said Herbert, his frank face glowing with kindly feeling toward

his friend. "I was awfully aggravating, and it isn't the first time, either, since we started on this trip. And you have borne and forborne, like a regular martyr. This is really the first out-and-out row we've had; but no thanks to me."

"Oh, this little squabble is n't anything," replied Gifford, beaming good-naturedly back upon Herbert. "It's a mere oasis in a perfect desert of good-will."

This mixed comparison made Herbert laugh.

"All the same," he said, "it was mighty lucky for us the 'Susan' tipped over just as she did. We might have come to blows."

"It would save a deal of trouble if angry people could always be ducked in cold water at the right moment," said Gifford. "Now, don't let's say anything more about the row. Let by-gones be by-gones. I can truly say, old sport, 'With all thy faults, I love thee still.'"

"Ditto, ditto!" exclaimed Herbert, in the highest of spirits that all was again serene between himself and Gifford.

The best of friends now, the boys paddled amicably on until the middle of the afternoon,

when they reached Dedham, having come over seven miles that day, and ninety-six miles in all.

As the weather had not yet fully cleared, and they both felt decidedly the worse for their recent experiences, they decided to stop here for the night, thinking they could complete their trip and reach home the following night. The fact that their funds were nearly exhausted, combined with their shabbiness, decided them to engage lodgings for the night at a sort of combined lager-beer saloon, restaurant, and cheap lodging-house, kept by a German woman near the river.

And now a sore temptation beset the boys. As Dedham adjoins Roxbury, it would really cost less to go home and spend the night than to stay here. They longed to go home, returning the next morning. But they reflected that they had determined to carry out the canoe trip as originally planned, and to go home by water or not at all. Running home across lots, as it were, before the trip was over, merely to avoid a little hardship, would be a decided weakening. So, wisely suppressing their yearnings

toward home, they decided, Grant like, to "fight it out on this line, if it takes all summer."

Although a sign hanging over their landlady's door announced "Cheap Board," the boys feared even that might be too dear for them; so, purchasing a loaf of baker's bread, a dab of butter, and a pie, they retired with these provisions to their small apartment, and feasted like the two valiant trenchermen they were. The bed was none too inviting; but any bed seemed such an improvement upon none at all, that the boys were not disposed to be critical, and tumbling into it early, slept hard and long.

CHAPTER XVI.

MILL CREEK.

WHEN the boys awoke late the next morning, the sun streaming brightly in at their one window promised a delightful day. They were on the alert at once, up, dressed, and ready to indulge in a very modest breakfast with their German landlady, who could not understand their declining the glass of beer which she, in the kindness of her heart, pressed upon them as a proper finish to the breakfast.

The sky overhead was cloudless, and of a deep Septemberish blue, and the air, washed clear by the storm, was full of ozone,—a brisk tonic that set one's blood tingling, made one alive all over, and ready for anything.

The boys expected to reach home that night, having successfully carried out their trip in every detail, not without some risks and hard-

ships. No wonder that their eyes shone, their cheeks glowed, their hearts were light within them, as they stepped gayly into the buoyant "Black-eyed Susan," picked up the faithful paddles, dipped and away, barely skimming the surface of the quiet Charles, but leaving a wake of ripples behind that broke up the mirrored picture in the river, of blue sky overhanging trees and vines, into a confused kaleidoscopic mass of glinting colors. Here and there a bunch of golden-rod, a rustiness in the green of tree and bush, a prematurely red-and-yellow branch thrust out by a maple, hinted, as did some subtle undertone in the air, "Summer's over; autumn's coming."

It was all beautiful and animating to the boys; and as they sped on, Herbert struck up,—

" Out on an ocean all boundless we ride ;
We 're homeward bound, homeward bound.
Tossed on the waves of a rough, restless tide,
We 're homeward bound, homeward bound."

Gifford, who felt like Herbert a strong drawing toward home, added on the refrain an uncertain bass to Herbert's half-tenor, half-soprano; and the two boyish voices floated pleasantly out

on the morning air, making more than one passer-by alongshore regard kindly the swift-gliding "Susan" and her happy sailors.

Ere long they came to the mouth, or rather source, of Mill Creek. Mill Creek is a singular freak of nature,—a river actually flowing from one river, the Charles, into another, the Neponset, thus making an island of the large tract of country enclosed by these three streams and the Atlantic.

The boys might have continued on the Charles, through Cambridge, to the sea. But the route *via* Mill Creek was not only several miles shorter, but would bring them into the harbor much nearer home. Moreover, Mill Creek, in its rapid descent from the Charles to the Neponset, pours tumultuously down over several dams, promising the boys work exactly suited to their overflowing energies this brisk morning. So it did not take them long to decide upon the Mill-Creek route home.

They entered this stream with lively expectations, which were destined to be more fully realized even than they anticipated, before the day was ended.

Experience had made them so expert, that they made quick work of the first dams they encountered, enjoying it all immensely.

"This seems like the good old times on the Piscataquog," suggested Herbert, as he wiped the perspiration from his glowing face.

"Yes," said Gifford, "that last dam was fine sport; equal to anything in the whole Uncanoo-nuc region."

At the next dam, however, they came to something entirely new in their experience. They found that the main portion of the water flowed under a large mill, which was built out partly over the dam. Peering under the mill, which was built very low, near the water's surface, they could see light ahead.

"I guess we can go right under the mill," said Gifford. "That light ahead is where we come out into the clear water below."

But on closer inspection, they discovered a dark, narrow sluice-way under the mill, down which a strong current poured directly upon the wheel.

"I don't like the looks of that sluice-way," said Gifford.

"It looks mighty suggestive, I must say," admitted Herbert.

As the boys rested on their paddles, debating what it was best to do, some of the mill-hands came to the door overhead, who, on learning the difficulty, said: "Oh, go ahead! You won't have any trouble getting through. There's no danger of getting into the sluice. Just aim for the light ahead, and you'll get through all right."

Thus encouraged, the boys ventured under, though not without a degree of nervousness. The mill timbers came so near the water that it was necessary to duck down into the bottom of the canoe while going under. Now, each end of the canoe, to prevent her shipping water, was covered with canvas for about two feet and a half. Herbert, who sat in the bow, as he ducked down, thrust his head under this canvas covering, and immediately forgot it, in his excitement.

When it seemed to him time for them to be coming out, suddenly he noticed, to his horror, that all was dark and suffocating about him. He could see no light ahead! They were in the sluice-way!

Giving one terrific yell of horror, he bounded up just in time to strike his head violently against the timbers as the "Susan" was emerging from under the mill.

Gifford, who, lying on his back in the stern, had been able to see light ahead all the time by raising his head slightly, and consequently knew that they were coming safely out into the open water, stared in amazement at Herbert, who sat gazing about him in a wild, dazed way, rubbing his head.

"What *is* the matter, Bert?" cried Gifford.
"Have you suddenly gone crazy?"

"Thought we were in the sluice," said Herbert. "Gracious, my skull must be thick! Did you hear the mill timbers crack just now?"

When he had fully explained his late ostrich-like situation to Gifford, they both laughed till they nearly fell out of the canoe, Herbert's keen sense of the ludicrous enabling him to enjoy a good joke even at his own expense.

Farther on down-stream they came to what seemed at first a formidable obstacle. Below them lay a high dam, with a road and bridge

crossing above it. Below the dam stood two large mills.

"We shall have to land here, and reconnoitre, to see how we can get around this," said Herbert.

They found that the main body of water ran under the mills. The mills were surrounded by a high fence, extending across the dam, and, after enclosing a large tract of land, crossing the stream again some distance below.

"This is a situation!" said Gifford, surveying these complications in perplexity. "One thing is sure; it will be next to impossible for us to carry the 'Susan' all the way around, below this mill fence."

"If we could only hoist her over this fence we should be all right," suggested Herbert. "We could slip her into the river there below the dam, and shoot under that fence down there easily enough."

"Let's see if we can do that," said Gifford.

The boys brought the canoe from the mill-pond to the fence, which Herbert easily scaled. After much effort, he one side the fence, Gifford the other, by their united exertions they suc-

ceeded in hoisting the "Susan" over, and landing her on the grass within the enclosure, when Gifford followed her. All this, however, took time.

Meantime, the attention of the girls working in that end of the mill nearest the dam was naturally attracted by these novel proceedings, and word gradually spreading up through the mill, and from that to the next, the mill-windows were now filled with interested spectators, while work was practically suspended.

As the boys began hurriedly dragging the "Susan" across the grass toward the river, the superintendent came out of the mill door, and stood on a low foot-bridge crossing the stream.

"You must take your boat right away from here," he said with authority. "Don't you see you're stopping work?"

The boys, it is to be feared, affected more dulness of comprehension than the actual facts warranted, feeling as they did the vital necessity of getting into the river then and there, at all hazards.

"Yes sir, yes sir," they said meekly, meantime dragging the canoe as fast as possible

across the grass toward the stream. "We're getting away just as quick as we can."

"Carry that canoe back out of here, I tell you! You're trespassing!"

"Yes sir; just as quick as we can," replied the boys, soothingly, pulling the canoe briskly down the grassy bank.

"Go right back out of here the way you came!" shouted the angry superintendent.

The boys were now at the water's edge, and felt their escape reasonably secure.

"That isn't quite so easy as it seems, sir," they replied, pushing the canoe into the water.

The superintendent was now furious, while the giggling mill-girls were delighted.

"I've warned you to go back. If you come on, I'll smash your canoe!" he shouted from his vantage-point on the foot-bridge.

The boys had leaped aboard and seized the paddles. "You smash this canoe at your peril!" shouted the excited Herbert. "Gif, let her sliver!"

The stream rushed down in a regular torrent under the bridge, and the boys put in their best strokes and dashed at railroad speed, under the

bridge, under the lower fence, and out into the stream below, shouting as they shot by the superintendent, "Thank you, sir! Ever so much obliged!"

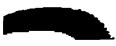
When they were at a sufficient distance from the factories to make it prudent to relax their speed, they drew in paddles and lay back and floated, to regain their breath.

"Pretty close work, that," said Gifford.

"Well, we could n't have carried the 'Susan' around all that distance," said Herbert; "and we really did n't do any sort of harm going across those factory grounds."

"'All is fair in love and war,'" quoted Gifford. "This was war,—war to the knife,—a clear case for strategy."

The boys were so elated by their triumphant escape, that they forgot the old proverb, "Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall." They were paddling gayly on, feeling like all-conquering heroes before whose proud advance everything is bound to give way, when they espied some way ahead of them a very low bridge. The river was full to either shore at this point, and its waters, at a distance,



seemed to come up nearly to the timbers of the bridge.

"Ha!" exclaimed Herbert. "Do you see that bridge, Gif? Think we can get under that?"

"Oh, that's easy enough," said Gifford. "We can just lie down flat on our backs, and pull ourselves under."

"How jolly!" said Herbert, delighted at this new experience.

As they drew nearer, they noticed two fellows lounging on the bridge, staring at them with open-mouthed interest.

"See those yokels stare," said Herbert. "Guess they never saw a canoe before."

"They mean to know one again when they see it," said Gifford.

The interest of the youths on the bridge rose to evident excitement as the canoeists lay down on their backs and disappeared under the bridge.

The under side of the bridge was too dusty and too "begarlanded of spiders" to be altogether agreeable so near one's face, and the boys clawed and pulled vigorously at the tim-

bers, to get through, and out of their close quarters.

"Seems to be a wide bridge," puffed Gifford, "wider than I thought."

"I was just thinking the same thing," said Herbert. "Hot work, this. I say, Gif, suppose a team should happen to trot smartly across this bridge just now; how the dirt would rattle down through the cracks into our eyes! Hark! I believe I hear one coming! Pull, Gif, pull!"

And the boys pulled more desperately than ever, until they were all in a perspiration. The canoe swayed violently, this way and that, but made no progress.

"I don't understand this," said Gifford. "We're not making any headway."

"The stern must be stuck against the bridge timbers," said Herbert. "Back her up, and then give a tremendous pull."

The boys backed the canoe, then gave a great pull to get her through, but brought up with a sudden jerk. They tried this experiment several times, always bringing up with this same jerk.

"Something's wrong," said Herbert. "Back her out."

Backing the canoe, they crawled out, covered with dust and cobwebs, to find, to their disgust, that the despised "yokels" had slyly seized their stern rope, as the canoe glided under, and tied them fast to the bridge.

Breathing wrath and slaughter, they landed, and beat the country-side up and down in hot quest of the enemy.

"Come out of the woods, you cowards! We want to see you a minute!" shouted Gifford.

"Yes," roared Herbert, "come out here, and we'll give you the best drubbing you ever had in your lives!"

But no response came to these hospitable invitations. The yokels had evidently scuttled off as fast as their legs could carry them, and were now doubtless lying somewhere in ambush behind the bushes, holding their sides with laughter over their successful trick.

It was some time before our canoeists cooled down sufficiently to pick up their paddles and resume their trip. This time they were soon under the bridge.

CHAPTER XVII.

ON THE NEPONSET.

LATE in the afternoon they left tumultuous Mill Creek for the quieter waters of the Neponset.

Their surroundings now began to seem most familiar and homelike. Close by looked down the picturesque Blue Hills of Milton. Through gaps in the fringe of trees and bushes along the river's bank they caught glimpses of stately old mansions standing far back on the hills under majestic elms,—houses with a history, houses that had the air of having been the home of well-known families for generations.

The boy's clothes—what were left of them—had become fearfully demoralized these last few days, growing no better very fast indeed; and their only hope now was to succeed in reaching home while enough tattered remnants yet held together to cover them.

They felt their shabbiness all the more keenly from the eminent respectability of their surroundings, and were greatly afraid of encountering acquaintances.

"How would you like to meet some of the Milton girls now, Gif," suggested Herbert,— "say that pretty Ruth Saltonstall, at whose house we had such a jolly time at her german last winter, you remember? The Salstonstall lawn runs down near the river somewhere along here, I think."

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Gifford. "Don't suggest such a horrible possibility, Bert! You make my blood run cold! If we are so unlucky as to meet any acquaintances, our only course is to cut them dead,— paddle right by, and make no sign. No one would ever recognize us, that's one comfort."

"I'm not so sure of that," said Herbert. "Girls have wonderfully sharp eyes."

Along in the afternoon, as, getting nearer and nearer the successful end of their trip, their spirits had risen to the point of recklessness, they came to a dam. Herbert, who was familiar with the locality, knew that it was low.

He had not forgotten — indeed, he was not suffered by Gifford to forget — the little episode of the mill-sluice. Now the happy idea occurred to him of “stumping” Gifford.

“Gif,” he said, “let’s go right over this dam impromptu,— without looking. Come, I dare you to go it blind.”

“All right,” said Gifford, not blenching an atom, or even making, as Herbert expected, any prudent remonstrances. “I don’t care.”

“Here goes, then,” said Herbert.

They bore straight down on the swift current toward the dam. Luckily, or unluckily, the water was lower than they thought, and, instead of plunging over the dam, the canoe caught on the flashboard and tipped them out, and the boys went splashing into the deep water, while all the canoe’s contents also went down and in.

As they were now quite as much at home in the water as on land, their spirits were not dampened, though their garments were, by this trifling episode. They even gathered themselves up and tried it again, with no better success. Finally, after several efforts they were obliged to give it up and carry the “Susan”

around, although a crowd of boys had gathered on the bank and cheered them on with cries of, "Go it again! Go it again!"

"As an original experimenter, you are not much of a success, Bert," remarked Gifford, as they toiled around through the bushes with the faithful "Susan."

"I would n't have given up so easily," said Herbert, "only it seemed a pity to knock in the 'Susan's' sides when we were so near home."

Farther on, in the set-back above another mill-dam, suddenly the phenomenon of rippling waves in the still water ahead attracted their attention.

"Hand me that setting-pole, quick!" cried Herbert, from the bow, in great excitement.

The setting-pole was a useful present that had been given the boys by their friends the lumbermen above Lowell,—a long iron-wood pole, with a sharp hook or prong at the end; an instrument the boys had often found very serviceable.

"What is it?" asked Gifford, as he passed up the setting-pole.

"The biggest mud-turtle you ever saw! Just look at the monster!"

Sure enough, Gifford could dimly see, paddling heavily along down in the water, a huge mud-turtle, at least eighteen inches long.

The boys had no special use for a mud-turtle; but all the hunter instinct, all the savage blood in them, woke at this sight, and they speared and splashed wildly at the turtle, feeling like whalers, Indians, Robinson Crusoe himself, all in one.

Herbert hit the turtle, but did not maim it, as the brisk agitation of the water showed it to be heading for the shore.

Again they caught a glimpse of the monster among the reeds along the bank. Leaping ashore, they had an exciting chase through mud, water, reeds, and bushes, Herbert armed with the setting-pole, and Gifford with a paddle. But the turtle, which had the advantage of being on its own ground, finally eluded them, disappearing in some hiding-place among the reeds known only to itself.

"What a shame we lost him, when we were so near!" exclaimed Gifford, as, hot and breathless, they returned to the canoe.

"Well, we had the fun of chasing him, anyway," said Herbert, whose kindly nature began to look at the matter from the turtle's point of view. "I hope I didn't hurt the poor creature. I suppose mud-turtles have their feelings, the same as other folks, only a fellow does n't always remember it, when he's on a still hunt."

Toward sundown, as they shot out from under the arch of a substantial stone bridge, they came suddenly upon a pleasing picture,—a boat-load of merry children floating along down-stream, a pretty, dark-haired girl sitting bareheaded in the stern, trimming her hat with barberries and plumes of golden-rod, while the big brother held the oars, the whole reflected in the dark, still waters of the Neponset.

As the boys glided by, from down-stream came a mellow view-halloo: "Oo-hoo! Oo-hoo!"

It seemed to be a well-understood signal.

"Oo-hoo!" yodled back the young boatman, picking up his oars, and plying them vigorously down-stream.

The boys, who preceded him, came to an evidently much-used landing-place, where sat on

the bank a gigantic brown mastiff, half as big as a man, and apparently nearly as intelligent.

"Oh, there's Elko!" cried the children.
"Elko! Elko! Come here, sir."

The intelligent Elko arose, and waved his majestic tail in civil response to this greeting, but declined to be enticed into the water, preferring to await his friends' arrival on shore.

As the boys swept on, they had a glimpse of what might have been an English park, but for the huge boulders which rose in almost startling contrast here and there from the smooth, green sward. These indeed were some of the very boulders whose origin Holmes ascribes to the pudding wildly flung about by the family of the Dorchester Giant some ages ago: —

"They flung it over to Roxbury hills,
They flung it over the plain,
And all over Milton and Dorchester too
Great lumps of pudding the giants threw;
They tumbled thick as rain.

.
"Giant and mammoth have passed away,
For ages have floated by ;
The suet is hard as a marrow-bone,
And every plum is turned to stone,
But there the puddings lie ! "

In the pleasant shade of fine trees grazed a herd of Holsteins, as handsome and as becoming to the landscape as deer; while in the distance, from a mass of foliage, peeped out the roof of a house, probably the home of the young folks whom the boys had just passed.

"I do believe Boston *is* the Hub of the Universe," said Herbert.

"Yes," said Gifford; "there's no place like home, especially when your home is in Boston."

The dam at Milton Lower Mills was the ninth the boys encountered that day.

The "Black-eyed Susan" was leaking somewhat, and in rather a used-up condition generally, and no wonder, after all her rough-and-tumble experiences. The boys durst not venture into the rapids below the dam in her, lest she come to grief. It would be aggravating in the extreme to shipwreck on their last day out, after coming safely through so much. They therefore unloaded the canoe, and walked out into the middle of the river with her, Gifford guiding the bow, while Herbert held the stern.

They were somewhat embarrassed by the

assembling of quite a crowd on the bridge above to watch their struggles, and felt that they could have dispensed with spectators, especially when, the current being very swift and the bottom uneven and rocky, they both slipped and went down. They held manfully to the canoe, but were dragged along some distance, not only rending their garments but cutting their bare feet and knees on the sharp rocks, all to the immense satisfaction and delight, apparently, of the boys on the bridge, who stimulated them with all sorts of derisive remarks, as they struggled up, dripping, to their feet again.

Below this point the water rushed with immense force through a narrow gorge between rocks. Taking their bearings carefully, the boys let go their footing on the bottom, and clinging to and guiding the canoe as best they could, they succeeded in letting her down through the worst part of the rapids into the smooth tide-water below. Yes, tide-water! For at last they were on the sea-level, and their voyage was practically over. This was the last of the thirty dams they had encountered in the trip.

Notwithstanding their unpleasantly moist con-

dition, aching backs, and bruised limbs, the boys were full of exultation.

"Well, Gif," said Herbert, all radiant smiles, "we've done it!"

"Bert, old sport," replied Gifford, his eyes shining triumphantly, "let me tell you one thing. There's no pleasure in the world equal to doing what you set out to do, carrying through your plan though heaven and earth seem set against it. I do hate to peter out!"

"I should say so!" said Herbert.

As they now paddled swiftly down the Neponset, their nostrils were greeted by the delicious salt smell of the ocean, their native air. Across the flats, even in the fast gathering darkness, could be seen gleaming palely a long white streak of water, — the Atlantic Ocean.

Night was coming on fast, the tide was low, there were no lights, and a strong off-shore breeze was blowing. Even the boys' strong desire to get home that night did not blind them to the risks involved in venturing out on the harbor at night under these circumstances.

"We shall have to give it up, after all," said Herbert,

"Yes," said Gifford; "it would be mere foolhardiness to try to make it to-night. We must put up somewhere here for the night."

The tide being out, the water was low in the river, and the flats uncovered. Under these circumstances, it was no easy matter to find a suitable place to leave the "Susan." Blundering around in the darkness, the boys at last managed to run her up on the flats, and secure her to a pile of logs, so that the incoming tide should not sweep her away.

"Good-by, old 'Susan.' See you again tomorrow morning!" shouted Herbert cheerfully, as they struck out through the mud for a light on shore.

Their rough appearance was not improved by the thick coating of black dock-mud that now covered them to their knees; and although Gifford remarked, "Our wounds are now plastered," the fact did not seem much comfort to them. The light they saw proved to be that of a small inn.

It took some courage to approach even a waterside tavern in their condition, and ask for lodgings. Although this was not a house patron-

ized by the "nobility and gentry," and the landlord was used to entertaining some rough characters, yet even he, and the very loafers in the bar-room, looked askance at our heroes in their sorry plight.

Herbert, nerved by necessity, rose to the emergency, and launched out into a humorous recital of their adventures and misadventures that soon had the room in a roar of laughter; and the softened landlord furnished them a pail of water to rinse off as much as possible of the Neponset soil they carried, and then admitted them to a small chamber in the roof, where excitement kept them long awake, tossing so restlessly about on the squeaking bedstead that it threatened to give out beneath them.

"To-morrow!" they thought joyfully; "to-morrow!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

IN PORT.

THE dormer-window of the boys' chamber opened toward the east. Though they went to sleep so late, they awoke very early, with the dawning of day. The whole eastern sky was flushed with a pink light. Leaning out of the window, they looked far off across the ocean, all restless this morning with little dancing waves, to where the red rim of the sun peered up apparently out of the water. Higher and higher he mounted, till the great red orb swung up into full view, and lay on the water, sending a long track of red light glinting across the restless waves to the very shore.

The boys drew in long breaths of the salt air.

"It's going to be a glorious day," said Gifford.

"Hurrah for We, Us, and Co.!" cried Herbert. "Let's waltz, old chappie! I must do something, or I shall burst!"



And away the boys went around the room in their night-gear, with all the grace acquired in many germans, and some extra touches thrown in, until they brought up full force against the venerable bedstead with a shock that threatened to crush it.

"Hold on!" said Gifford. "We can't afford to invest in furniture just at this period of our brilliant career. We must be off. The earlier we get home the better."

"I should say so. There's some danger, I'm afraid, that the police will arrest us for two 'vagrom men,' before we reach the shelter of the paternal roof," said Herbert.

They paid twenty-five cents each for their lodging, and made the "Boots" happy by presenting him with all the clothes left to them, except the tattered remnants still necessary to wear on their persons. Preferring to breakfast at home, they only bought a few crackers to keep themselves from being faint, and munched them as they walked down to where the "Susan" lay.

"Cap'n Cuttle," said Herbert, "please make a note of this solemn vow of mine. This is the

last cracker I shall ever eat. I never want to *see* another cracker as long as I live."

"I'll join you in taking that vow," said Gifford, laughing.

They paddled lightly away down the Neponset, which wound brightly along through its vivid green salt marshes in the morning sunlight. Everything looked so familiar, so beautiful, to the home-coming boys. The stacks of brown marsh-hay, the irregular inlets and pools where the tide set back, the innumerable skiffs and boats tied to poles and bobbing restlessly about on the tide, the rows of bath-houses, the broad expanse of deep-blue water stretching far away to the horizon, the white sails far and near, gleaming in the sunlight, the mass of brick houses in the distance with the gilt dome towering above,—how well the boys knew it all! And underneath, hardly realized, lay the charm which the ocean has for every one, but especially for those born on its shore.

Soon they came out upon the bay, which was lively this morning with countless white-capped waves, upon which the "Black-eyed Susan" danced like a cork, apparently as light-hearted

and joyous as the boys themselves. Herbert's fertile imagination was stimulated by excitement.

"I tell you what, Gif," he said, "we ought to be blown out to sea now, for a little finish to our trip, and picked up by an out-bound Cunarder! Fancy the fun of it,—our obituaries in the papers, our weeping families appreciating our virtues at last, and all that. After a few weeks, some fine morning, lo and behold, the door opens, and in walk the long-lost sons!"

"With a bagful of gold under each arm, I suppose," said Gifford. "You ought to write a dime novel, Bert. No, plain, tame coming home is good enough for me, with one of my mother's breakfasts in the background."

"Breakfast! I should say so!" said Herbert, making the water fly as he paddled all the faster for Gifford's cheerful suggestion.

At last the much-enduring canoe was rounded triumphantly up to the Savin Hill wharf, the paddles were dropped, the canoe trip was ended! One hundred and seven miles had the "Black-eyed Susan" come from the hills of New Hampshire to the Atlantic Ocean.

The boys trudged home on foot through Dorchester to Roxbury, choosing the by-ways rather than the highways.

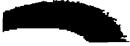
"How distressingly trim and civilized Roxbury does look!" exclaimed Herbert, as they passed handsome houses with close-shaven lawns and precise beds of foliage plants and geraniums, neat bank-walls, great old trees without a superfluous branch or even twig. Everything looked so finished, so carefully kept, Herbert felt it almost oppressive. "I can hardly draw a long breath," he exclaimed. "I feel shut in; I pine for the wilds of the Piscataquog."

"You look like a pirate,—an amiably disposed pirate," said Gifford. "I expect it's going to be hard on us, breaking into civilization again. But if we only get home this morning without meeting any one we know, I can bear anything else."

"I doubt if they know us at home," said Herbert.

Such, indeed, proved to be the case.

Mrs. Osborne had risen unusually early this morning, partly to water some plants near the side porch before the sun should reach them.



As she was thus occupied, Nora, at the kitchen window, said,—

“I never saw the beat of it, how thick the tramps are getting! Here comes another. Wants his breakfast, I suppose.”

Mrs. Osborne glanced toward the side gate and saw a ragged young fellow just entering. Her heart was very tender toward all wanderers just then, on account of her own boy who was out somewhere in the wide world; and she said kindly, “Poor boy! You must give him a good breakfast, Nora,” and went on with her work.

The tramp meanwhile drew near, and suddenly seized her around the waist. Mrs. Osborne dropped the watering-pot, deluging her slippered feet, and screamed.

“Why, don’t you know me, mother?” cried Herbert, while the whole family rushed out of the house.

Great was the laughter, the kissing, the talking all together, the exclamations over Bert’s incredible appearance. Mrs. King and Gifford soon came over to compare notes.

“I nearly fainted when I saw Gifford,” said

Mrs. King. "I really can't get over the shock. I never should have known him,—never!"

"I should n't have thought it possible," said Marion, "that any one could look worse than Bert does; but I really believe, Gifford, you go a few degrees beyond him."

"If I look any worse than Bert, I don't want to live," said Gifford. "I 'll hie me to a nunnery."

"You'd both best hie you to a bath-tub," said Mrs. Osborne, "and then we will have breakfast, and you can tell us all about your adventures. Luckily, I have some of your favorite muffins this morning, Herbert."

"Muffins!" exclaimed Herbert, tragically. "Oh, mother, you touch a tender chord!" and he fell in affected tears of joy on her neck.

"We are not particular," said Gifford. "Don't put yourselves out on our account. Almost anything will do for us, eh, Bert?"

"Anything but crackers."

In short, the boys were lionized to their heart's content, their admiring families sitting at their feet, as it were, and listening with mingled

admiration and dismay to the tale of their varied experiences.

"To think what the poor boys must have suffered!" exclaimed Mrs. King. "Just look at their hands, and the color of their faces, and Gifford's trousers, and only one shoe on his foot!"

"The 'poor boys' don't seem to need much sympathy," said Mr. Osborne, gazing with satisfaction on their black and sunburnt visages and horny hands, and fancying he already saw an added manliness in Herbert's bearing.

Aunt Asenath had happened to drop in early that morning on the way to her grocer's, and so, luckily, was just in time for all the excitement of the home-coming, and to see the boys with the bloom of travel fresh upon them.

"Well," she said, "as you have come home alive, there's nothing to be said, I suppose. But it's a most merciful dispensation of Providence that you were n't drowned a dozen times over; and I'm sure you'll both have the rheumatism yet,—wading about in the water, sleeping on the ground, shooting over dams! Boys are strange creatures, I must say."

She was so pleased, however, with the pressed flowers that Herbert had brought her from the sacred soil of Concord,— specimens she particularly desired, as it happened,— that she half forgave him for enjoying himself in ways so foreign to her own tastes, and for having falsified all her predictions and all the probabilities.

Gifford and Herbert broke into civilization again much more easily than might have been expected. Old habit is second nature. Soon, immolated in correct array, even to starched shirts and polished shoes, they might have been observed walking the streets of Roxbury and Boston, the admired of all the young ladies of their acquaintance:—

“ Of war and fair women
The young knights are dreaming,
With bright breastplates gleaming,
And plumed helmets on ! ”

Only their sunburnt faces, their brown and calloused hands, their abnormal appetites, distinguished them from common mortals who had not been on a canoe trip.

The account of their experiences, losing nothing, it must be confessed, in the recital, made

great sport among their friends, and gave them a popularity that was hard for their rivals to bear calmly. One envious youth attempted to hint that the canoe trip was becoming bore-us, and to compare them to the Ancient Mariner:

“ He holds him with his skinny hand, —
‘ There was a ship,’ quoth he ; ”

but he at once found himself on the unpopular side, and was glad to recant and sit humbly at the all-conquering heroes’ feet. When a full report of their trip actually graced the columns of the “Advertiser,” to be copied thence into the “Transcript” and “Globe,” the boys felt that they had indeed reached the summit of earthly fame.

Bessie Temple dropped the Harvard Freshman who was basking in her smiles, so suddenly that it was some time before that young gentleman realized the cyclone that had swept over his prospects; and Herbert did *not* mention the “merry maiden” of the Merrimac to her. And we may safely surmise that after the canoe had been duly repaired and made taut, Sue Fox had more than one opportunity of testing

her namesake's speed on the moonlit waters of Dorchester Bay.

Whatever a cold outside world might think of the canoe trip, the immediate relatives of the canoeists were so happy to have them return alive and sound of limb, that they readily conceded the trip to be, what the boys evidently considered it, one of the most successful and remarkable voyages known to history.

As for the boys, much as they talked of it, no one could ever know quite all that their trip had been to them. Its experiences had taught them a certain dauntlessness and self-reliance, a contempt for obstacles and for trifling inconveniences, that form no small part of a manly character. It had been a royally good time; but, best of all, it was a good time forever. As the years roll on, bringing cares and trials that shall somewhat dampen the enthusiasm of boyhood, brighter and brighter will shine the memory of those happy, careless summer days on New England rivers,—the days of “Their Canoe Trip.”

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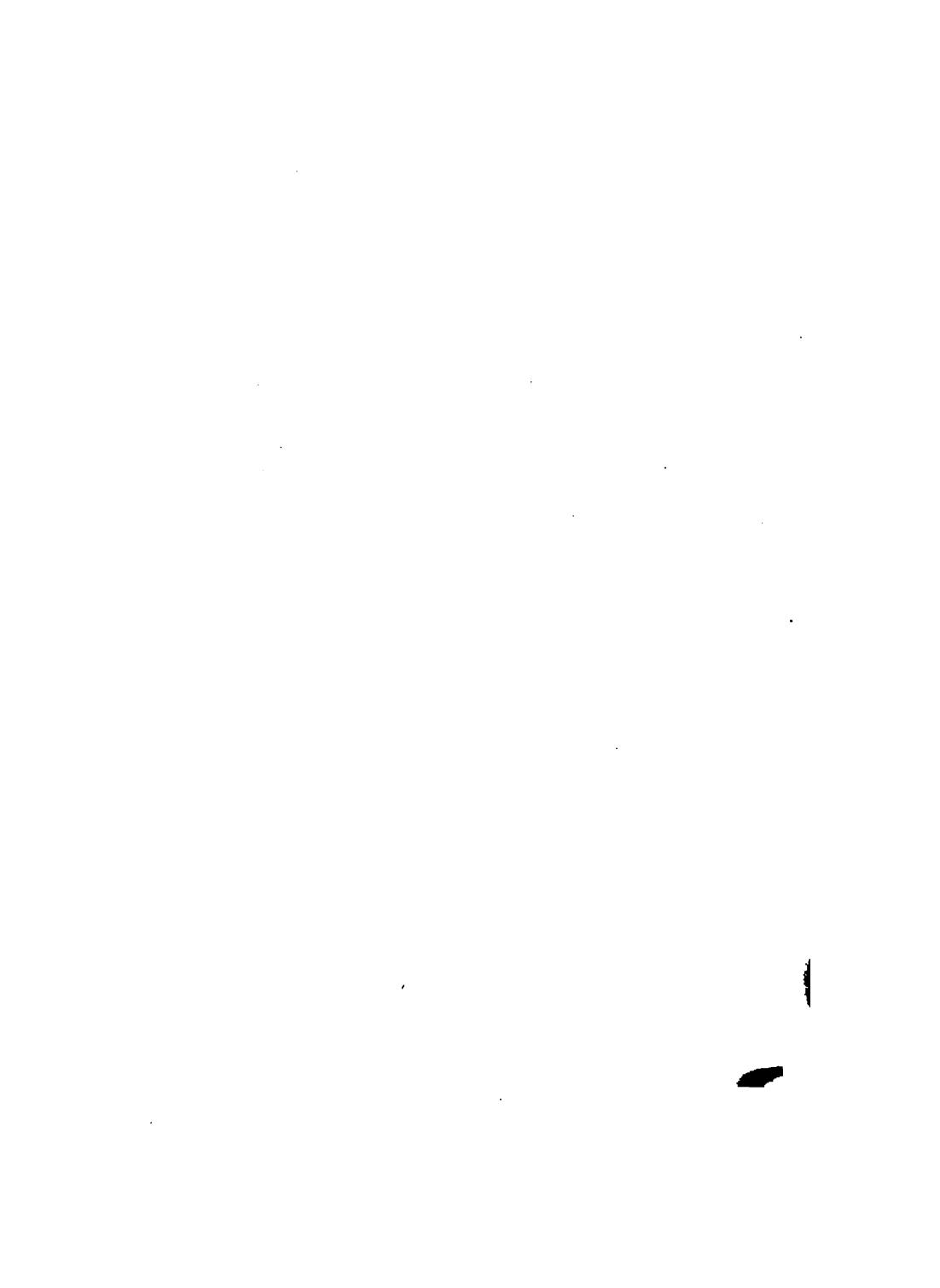
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